

MANTRAS

Words of Power



Swami Sivananda Radha

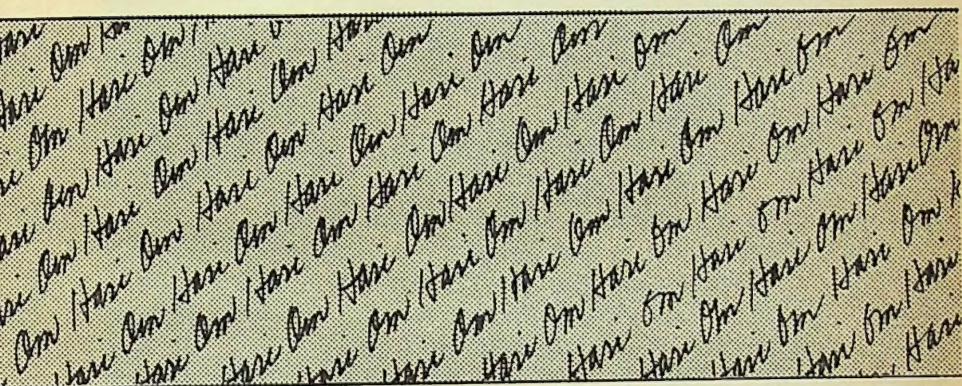


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Dedicated. . .

To Swami Sivananda Saraswati of Rishikesh, India
and all the Gurus before him who have
prepared the Path.



*Know that by prostration, by question and service,
the wise who have realised the Truth will instruct
thee in that knowledge.*

• from the *Bhagavad Gita* •

Acknowledgements

The publication of this book is an effort of many years preparation and involves the patience, time and energy of a "team," a group of individuals who have both knowingly and unknowingly made their contributions.

My gratitude initially goes to those who were my teachers at Sivananda Ashram in India: Swami Nada Brahmananda, my music guru who instructed me in Mantra chanting; Swami Venkatesananda who, when I went through arduous training and despaired, would quietly play on his veena and lift my spirits by the power of the Mantra; Professor Shastri who gave me the theory and history of Mantras; and to Swami Saradananda who took the photographs.

There have been many others who have given encouragement and financial assistance. In the actual production of the book, the high calibre of the editors, designers and printers is evidence of their dedication to the Work. To all of them I express my deep gratitude.

preceding page:

Swami Radha receiving her mala from Swami Sivananda
on the day of her Mantra initiation in India in 1955.

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Cover and title page illustrations:

The Archer, a Thai sculpture, is one of the pieces of Oriental art from the author's collection. It depicts the moment of the aspirant having released the arrow (the tool or practice, in this case the Mantra) to meet the target which will be the goal decided upon at various levels until the final target of Liberation is hit.

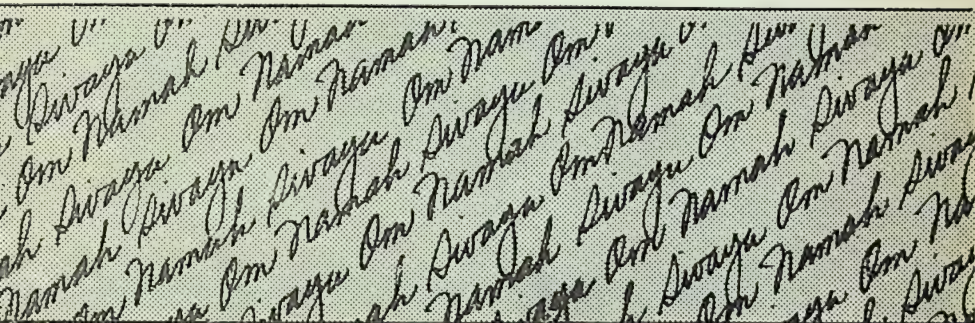


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Chapter One

What is Mantra?



A mantra is a combination of sacred syllables which forms a nucleus of spiritual energy. This serves as a magnet to attract or a lens to focus spiritual vibrations. According to the Upanishads, the ancient scriptures of India, the original abode of the Mantra was the Parma Akasha or primaeval ether, the eternal and immutable substratum of the universe, out of which, in the uttering of the primal sound Vach, the universe itself was created. (This same account is found in the Gospel of St. John, "In the beginning was the Word.") The Mantras existed within this ether and were there directly perceived by the ancient Rishis, or seers, who translated them into an audible pattern of words, rhythm and melody.

The root *man* in the word *Mantra* means in Sanskrit "to think"; *tra* comes from *trai*, meaning "to protect or free from the bondage

of *samsara* or the phenomenal world." Therefore *Mantra* means, "the thought that liberates and protects." But there are many levels of meaning in a Mantra which must be experienced to be truly understood. An intellectual explanation encompasses only a very small part of its meaning.

The chanting or recitation of mantras activates and accelerates the creative spiritual force, promoting harmony in all parts of the human being. The devotee is gradually converted into a living center of spiritual vibration which is attuned to some other center of vibration vastly more powerful. This energy can be appropriated and directed for the benefit of the one who uses it and that of others.

Every Mantra has six aspects: a *Rishi* or seer, a *raga* or melody, a *Devata* or presiding deity, a *Bija* or seed sound, *Sakti* or power and *Kilaka* or pillar.

The *Rishis*, through their intuitive perception, opened themselves to the revelation of the Mantras and were able to recognize their own effectiveness as channels for the flow of grace, knowledge and power from the Divine. These ancient seers understood that their powers were intended to be used in the service of others, as a guide to mankind.

The Mantras were transmitted from generation to generation, from Guru to disciple, and in this process the power of the Mantras was greatly increased. The repetition billions of times by countless devotees over the centuries has brought about a vast reservoir of power which augments the inherent spiritual potency of the Mantras.

The *raga* is comparable to a western melody line — a sound, or sequence of single sounds, without harmony. When chanting a Mantra it is extremely important that the *raga* and its key should not be changed, because the rate of vibrations on which the sound is based is an integral part. All Indian music is based on the understanding that there are two aspects to every sound: the audible expression; and the subtle sound-essence which carries the meaning and which arises from the eternal Spirit. This essence is called *Shabda* or *Vach*. When the spoken word is perfectly sounded within and without, contact is made with this power which manifests as an image.

There is a certain power in a word even on a human level — one's own name has a special significance, and the way in which it is pronounced can convey numerous messages. Different tones cause different vibrations affecting the bodily, as well as the emotional, response.

The practice of Mantra Yoga for a long period of time makes one aware of sounds actually creating images, and of certain images having an inherent sound.

In his book "Japa Yoga" Swami Sivananda Sarasvati says that sounds are vibration which give rise to definite forms. The repeated chanting of the name of the Lord gradually builds up the form or special manifestation of the deity worshipped (the *Devata*) and acts as a focus to concentrate this influence, which then penetrates and becomes the center of consciousness of the worshipper.

The *Devata* is the presiding deity of the Mantra, the informing power, a very personal aspect of God. It is the wisdom that comes from a higher source and is like a single beam of sunlight, one beam that is singled out and given a name so that the disciple can develop a personal relationship and worship an aspect of God that he or she can understand. In the beginning, God is too awesome for the human mind to grasp and only later can the Divine Energy be perceived in its pure form.

Each Mantra has a *Bija* or seed. This is the essence of the Mantra and gives it special power — self-generating power. Just as within a seed is hidden a tree, so the energy in the Mantra is the seed from which will grow a beautiful spiritual being.

The *Kilaka*, or pillar, is at first the driving force, the persistence and will-power that the disciple needs to pursue the Mantra. But when the power of the Mantra begins to take on a self-generating "flywheel motion," the kilaka becomes a very fine thread joining the disciple to the Mantra, to the power of the Mantra, to the Guru and to the Deity, until all become one.

The power, the consciousness within the Mantra, is *Sakti*, Divine Mother, the Goddess of the Spoken Word. The male aspect of God is energy in a state of equilibrium; the female aspect is dynamic energy which manifest as creation. There is only one Energy in all created things; in the Mantra that energy is present in pure form. The potency of the Mantra is released through repetition until the individual finally comes to his or her *Devata* (the particular aspect of the Divine associated with the Mantra) and a spiritual experience may take place.

"Mananat Trayate Iti Mantrah" means that by constant recollection or thinking of the Mantra one is protected from the impact of Maya, the illusory world. Through repetition of these words of power,

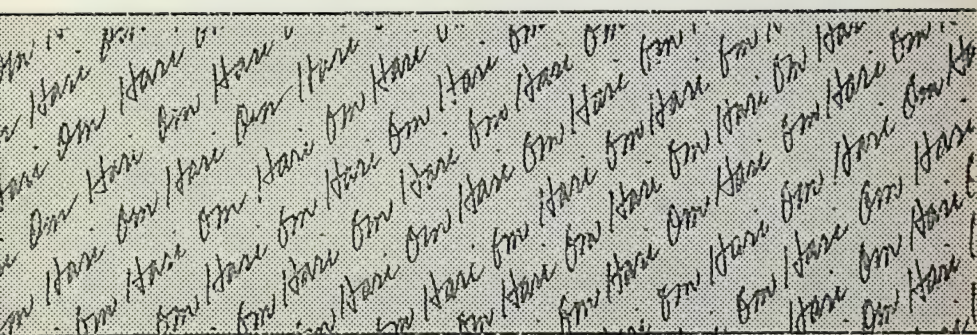
the goal of Mantra Yoga is achieved — that is (as with all Yogas) unity of individual consciousness with Cosmic Consciousness.

Mantra is not prayer. Prayer consists of words of supplication chosen by the spiritual aspirant, while Mantra is a precise combination of words and sounds — the embodiment of a particular form of consciousness or Sakti.

*Mantra is the song of a star. . .
and it will transport you to that star.*

Chapter Two

Mantra and Japa Yoga



Mantra Yoga is one of the manifold Yogas, of which there are about 40, all intertwined like threads of a cloth. The four principal ones are: Bhakti Yoga, the Yoga of love and devotion; Karma Yoga, the Yoga of action, of selfless service; Jnana Yoga, the Yoga of knowledge and wisdom; and Raja Yoga, called the "Kingly Yoga," a combination of several Yogas based on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. One type of spiritual practice is sufficient to attain God realization, but since there is an interaction of the body forces, the Yogas cannot be totally separated. Also because of physical problems, such as restlessness, poor blood circulation, it is recommended that several different Yogas be included in a balanced practice.

The chanting of a Mantra is called Mantra Yoga. When the Mantra is spoken aloud,

this is known as Vaikhari Japa; when whispered or hummed it is Upamsu Japa; when repetition is mental it is Manasika Japa; written Mantra is called Likhita Japa.

The use of Mantra in any of these forms is effective in securing single-pointedness of mind. The most subtle, Manasika Japa, although it is very powerful, may be difficult for those who are just beginning a Mantra practice. Alternating it with vocal repetition helps to keep the mind from wandering. Likhita can be done in any script, in any language, but should be consistent for the chosen length of time. This repetitive writing brings peace, poise and strength within, and may also be used to alternate with the other forms of Japa.

Chanting a Mantra with devotion and concentration attunes the individual through divine melody and has a harmonious influence over the whole body and mind. It is most important to use the correct raga (melody) always, since precise rules govern the interrelation and sequences of sound. Each raga, which is a particular combination of sound, is claimed to reflect the laws of the universe and to be in perfect harmony with it at the time it is sounded. Since sound results from the union of breath and intellect of the human being, the one who chants will be brought to harmony also.

Through constant repetition of the Mantra one becomes like a magnet attracting the spiritual power of the Mantra to oneself and becoming aware of the Self. This repetition gradually awakens the higher faculties in a person and raises the consciousness towards the level of the Mantric resonance. According to Vedic teaching, "A Mantra has the power of releasing the Cosmic and Supra-cosmic Consciousness," and it bestows freedom, ultimate illumination and immortality. Not only does the singer benefit, but also those who listen and attune themselves to the spirit of the singing. This serves not only as an aid to meditation but is, in fact, a form of meditation in itself.

Chanting produces a whole series of psychological and spiritual effects. The concentration brings a deep sense of peace and joy, as often arises with other forms of meditation. The Mantra serves the same function as the "koan" in Zen or the mandala of Tibetan Buddhism: it functions as a device for focusing the ordinarily dispersed powers of the mind to a sharp point that is capable of penetrating through the sifting sands of thoughts to the deeper layers of mind beneath.

When a Mantra has been received from a Guru, the power of that Mantra increases after the initiation. As the initiate practices, the

Mantra becomes a self-generating force, uniting the individual with this power. Through your own efforts you are drawn towards the chain of Gurus who have found Realization through the use of the Mantra. In due time, you must become a link in that chain.

By reciting the Mantra you carry its force and power, and this will be a blessing for all those you meet. At times the Mantric Power may take over so that it will not even be necessary to speak. As a person, as a mind, you do not need to get involved. This is a much more valuable communication which can take place on the soul level.

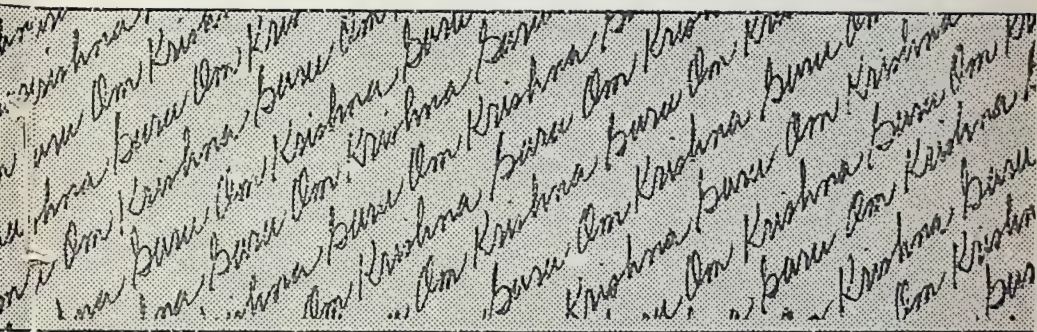
The practice of this form of Yoga is as effective today as in former times, and is still taught and practiced by the Gurus and spiritual teachers of India. In fact, it is said that Mantra Shastra is the easiest means by which the aspirant may reach Self-realization in the present era. Mantras are used at every significant step of the religious life in the Indian spiritual tradition. In the Guru/disciple relationship, both are under an obligation throughout their lives to chant the Mantra which has been given to the disciple. It constitutes a permanent spiritual link between them.

Mantra is an accumulation of power that is activated by the one who practises it, drawing this power to oneself and merging in it through surrender. Through the use of Mantra, one becomes conscious of the self, beginning with a small "s" and expanding the awareness that will eventually lead to becoming aware of the Self with a capital "S". This results eventually in achieving unity of the lower and the Higher Self. Mantra leads the Spirit, lost in trivialities and worldly pursuits, back to pure Essence.

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Chapter Three

Mantra Practice



When you begin to recite and practice Mantra you need to clarify to yourself what you want to achieve. What are your ideals? You can rightfully pin your hopes on the Mantra to help bring these ideals into manifestation in your life in the purest form possible. But to what extent and how soon this will come to pass depends on you. Obviously, the more you put into it the more you will achieve. The pearl exacts its price.

As you chant, observe the mind. You may be shocked at how easily the mind can be sidetracked and how quickly you get bored. You may even begin to doubt your sincerity in desiring God or desiring to become single-pointed, as you watch the mind finding 95,000 excuses. Perhaps you will tell yourself that doing a charitable act would be a more worthwhile way to spend the time. But you are missing the point when you start thinking

this way. You will be of far more help to others when you have gained some spiritual power.

The choice of the Mantra is extremely important because the greatest success lies with the Mantra to which you can best surrender. There is a specific Mantra for each person — their Ishta Mantra. This does not mean that no two people will have the same Mantra. However, in Nada Yoga, the Yoga of sound, there is a particular sound, a particular vibration to which your body will best respond. The Mantra that is designated for you corresponds to your spiritual nature.

There are many ways in which a Mantra may be chosen. You can chant a Mantra to which you simply feel drawn and naturally attracted. Or, if you are fortunate enough to find a true Guru, your Guru may choose the Mantra to which you are best suited.

Having chosen or been given your Mantra, stay with it until you have had some experience of its power. Resist the temptation to change to another one, thinking perhaps you made the wrong choice, or because you are bored or because the high notes are too difficult for you to reach. Begin with one Mantra and lay a good foundation. Only at a much later stage of your development can you use two or three Mantras simultaneously.

In the practice of Japa Yoga, a mala is used to assist in counting the repetitions of the name of a Divine aspect such as Siva or Divine Mother. A mala is a string of 108 beads, usually made of sandalwood, tulsi, or rudraksha seeds. The number 108 is a holy number. 1 means one line, symbolizing God, the Supreme Energy, the power from which all other lines, circles or movements come. 0 is completeness, a circle representing God's creation as complete and perfect. 8 is the sign of eternity — creation goes on eternally, so this brings in the time element. Time can be stretched or compressed. This understanding comes only through practice.

The mind is constantly moving, using energy unproductively because the "mental background noises" mostly concern past or future events. Life is a chain of cause and effect. The beads of the mala are also an endless chain and the endless thoughts are now given with each bead a specified, significant meaning relating to the particular Mantra. There is a special bead called Mount Meru where the mala is tied together. When the fingers reach Mount Meru, the mala should be turned and the movement continued the other way. This bead symbolizes God-realization and each time you reach it you have a reminder

that you do not have to continue the chain of cause and effect. Another reminder is given in holding the mala at heart level, signifying the devotional aspect of this practice, the attempt to transcend the lower levels of being.

The use of a mala gives the body some activity and thereby releases nervous energy or restlessness. The beads are moved between the third (ring) finger and the thumb, never the first (index) finger and thumb, as the Mantra is repeated with each bead. Through use of the beads they take on some of the energy of the user and they become spiritualized. The mala is made from the tulsi tree and is a little rough at first, but the beads become smooth from the practice. The mala should be worn around the neck with Mount Meru in front. Wearing the mala reminds you of your purpose in life, to realize God, the Self, because you feel it when you move in all your daily activities. Place it under your pillow or on your altar at night. Especially for the busy Western person the practice of the mala has therapeutic value because of its benefit of concentrating the mind, directing the emotions and focusing the body, all of which leads to the spiritual realm.

To get the greatest benefit from your Mantra practice, set a definite period of time aside each day and make a written commitment to yourself to continue the practice for a sufficient length of time that you can feel its effects. Three months is a good beginning. Begin small and build up — this develops enthusiasm and perseverance to handle greater things. Do not be over-ambitious, letting the ego convince you that you will be able to sustain a long period of chanting immediately. A little seedling needs the greatest care and attention. Handle your spiritual growth with at least as much care as you would a plant.

The recommended time for Mantra practice is four o'clock in the morning because at that hour there are few troubling vibrations in the air. However, this may be difficult unless you are living in an Ashram or by yourself. When you set your time for practice, remember that you should not chant for at least an hour and a half after meals. As you become accustomed to the idea, increase the time of practice. You will become very conscious of time, how you spend it and how, perhaps, you waste it. Make a practice of writing down everything that you do. See where you waste time and learn to be efficient so that you can find the time you want for spiritual practice.

Before beginning to chant take a bath, or at least wash your hands, face and feet. As you wash, think that the impurities of your

mind are being washed away. Put on fresh clothes and think that your soul is being clothed with a new garment of a Divine nature. These thoughts will help to uplift you. Put into your mind a clear, commanding thought that your full attention will be given to chanting for a specific period of time. Free the mind of all other things by going through any worries or duties, firmly promising yourself that you will deal with them when your period of chanting is over but they are not to intrude on the time you have set aside to be holy.

Choose a quiet spot where you will not be disturbed and use it each time, facing north or east. Sit in a comfortable chair or on the floor with a cushion. If a cushion is used for support of the back, be sure that it is placed below the waist to straighten the spine, not to fill in the curve at the waist. There is a subtle power in the thought of straightening the spine, suggesting straightforwardness, thinking straight, moving with uprightness and strength.

Put down a pure wool blanket or a pure silk cloth at the place you have chosen. A deerskin or tigerskin are traditionally used for this purpose, to conserve energy and keep out the vibrations of the earth. We want to create a very different magnetism that will release us from the magnetism of the earth, from our needs and instincts, that will carry us to great heights of consciousness and awareness. A cloth of natural fibre covering the body fulfils the same function and helps to retain the spiritual vibrations you generate.

Sit on the floor with the left leg over the right, or in one of the traditional Yogic asanas such as *siddhasana* (the perfect pose), *padmasana* (the lotus), *vajrasana* (kneeling pose), or *sukhasana* (easy pose); or in a chair with your back straight. The spine must be straight so that the electrical current which is created or stimulated through the chanting can flow freely. A crooked spine is like a broken wire; sometimes the connection is made and sometimes it is not. From the Yogic point of view this pranic circuit of the body should be closed by crossing the ankles to maintain the beneficial effects of the Mantra. Rest the hands in your lap, with the palms up, thus suggesting surrender and receptivity to divine insights.

Before beginning to chant make sure that not only the large muscles of your body are relaxed, and the neck and shoulders, but also the muscles of the tongue, jaw, forehead and eyes. Focus the eyes gently on the space between your eyebrows.

As you chant, pull the abdominal muscles in, thus forcing the air

out of the lungs. Let the chest widen by itself as the air comes in, not by lifting the shoulders. Use all the breath, all your energy. Put yourself completely into your chanting. It is important to breathe through your nose. The right kind of deep breathing will naturally begin to take place when you chant; there is no danger, as there is with some breathing exercises. Watch your breath and keep expelling it evenly.

Learn to sit motionless for increased periods of time and check the position of the body at the end of the time to be sure that your head, shoulders and back are straight, but relaxed, with the vertebrae one on top of the other.

To summarize: sit erect, relaxed, in a quiet place, on a piece of cloth of natural fibre, left leg crossed over right, hands in lap, palms up. Deal with objections and obstacles before you start to chant, then give yourself a clear commanding thought of what you are about to do. Focus attention on the space between the eyebrows. Then begin to chant, drawing in the abdominal muscles to expel the air and, as you breathe in, feel the chest widening. Set the length of time for chanting and stick to it. Work at keeping the mind interested and concentrated. Afterwards write down observations that easily come to mind. As time goes on you will find it revealing to read them over.

At the beginning and end of your practice, offer a prayer of thanksgiving to those who have chanted the Mantra. In this way you attract those who have found God-realization by the use of the Mantra. If you say, "Help, help, please come and help me," they will come to support you. By accepting that this is possible, you help yourself to have the experience. Do not let your intellect decide what can or cannot be. Hold judgement suspended and see what happens.

The melody of the Mantra must never be changed. The combination of sounds is based on the perception of the Rishis who translated the etheric vibrations into those particular combinations for the purpose of creating a magnetic effect in the human being.

If you have difficulty in reaching the high notes, do not let the ego get in the way and discourage you from continuing. The voice needs training, and with time, patience and practice you will get there. That is one of the little miracles along the way, as you find your voice becoming clearer, smoother and more able to reach notes you never thought possible. Not being able to reach the high notes should be seen symbolically. As the voice needs training, the mind and consciousness also

need to be trained with the same diligence to reach heights you never dreamed of.

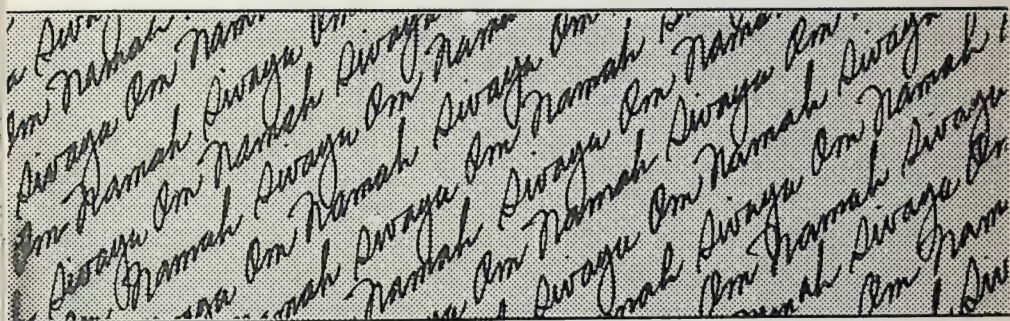
Really put yourself into the chanting. If you allow it to become mechanical, or if you let yourself think it is monotonous, or if you let your interest drop, it will take a longer time to be effective. As with learning a language; the more you give yourself to it, the faster you will become fluent. When you study and practice Mantra you will learn the language of the Divine, the Most High.

After your Mantra practice remain quiet and receptive, surrendering your will to the Divine. Allow the still, small voice to speak. Come out of your practice gently and slowly. Don't get up and rush into something new. Try to keep the sensitivity, peace and quiet for as long as possible. Time is needed following spiritual practice for the effects to be absorbed.

Chapter Four

Worship:

Cultivating the Imagination



The mind needs a concrete image to keep it single-pointed during Mantra practice. In Bhakti Yoga, the Yoga of Love and devotion, the devotee concentrates on the picture of the Deity connected with the Mantra. This Deity, the *Ishta Devata*, creates a great longing in the devotee. There is a link of love and mercy, an extended help from the power of the deity, which the picture represents. This happens because of the complete surrender of the body, of the mind and of the ego at the feet of the Deity. The image stands for the Most High, everything that is holy, perfect, beautiful to the mind of the devotee, and there is a response of those qualities within the individual.

We can only understand and see God as we create Him in our mind, and we begin by creating God in our own image. You can paint an image, take one from a book, or you

can use a picture of your spiritual teacher. This can be most helpful, since you already know what he or she looks like. Any image of the Divine that you charge with the power of your mind, your prayer, your love brings the image to life. In this way you cultivate your imagination while practicing the Mantra.

There is great wisdom in entering into a personal relationship with a particular aspect of God. As a method of overcoming the temptation to be side-tracked and to pacify the rebellious mind you can intersperse the recitation of Mantra with brief periods of worship, using flowers, making garlands, caring for an altar, thus bringing into your consciousness that aspect of the Divine.

For example, if your chosen deity is Lord Siva, the aspect of the Divine as the destroyer of all obstacles, you can grow white flowers and place them on an altar for Him. Designate and keep some spot in your home as a holy place. By the law of thought association the white flowers will put you in touch with the snowy peaks of the Himalayas, the abode of Lord Siva. If you chant Hari Om, invoking the aspect of the Lord as Vishnu, the preserving one, for Him you could use blue flowers. Roses or other colourful flowers may be used as an offering to Divine Mother when you use Ave Maria as your Mantra.

These images of worship can also be invoked in the mind's eye, and so increase the power of positive imagination. Desire is born out of imagination. In worship we put God into our mind so He becomes part of our desire, and we raise the scheming for the fulfillment of desire to a higher level.

The eyes may be kept closed, focused on the space between the eyebrows. If the mind cannot be stilled when you are chanting, open your eyes and chant straight to heaven, invoking the name of God with a deep feeling of expectancy that Someone is really listening. Use the power of your imagination and, looking into the sky, imagine an enormous ear. Sing into this ear and see what happens. Or take an image of God and establish it firmly in your mind. Then try to reproduce it in the sky and feel a deep longing to be near God. Imagine Christ on the Cross, or in a fishing boat calming the storm; or Krishna, with his beautiful Indian jewelry, his peacock feather, his flute, his ankle-bells and his blue skin, which shows that he is God and not another human being, that He stands for the divine principle.

Another method of cultivating imagination is to imagine that you are placing a flower before the image of God; this gesture will help you to realize that only after you have done the preliminary work with

your imagination can you recognize God in the flower or see the Light Force in it.

Place a flower, real or imagined, before an image of Christ, the Virgin Mother, Siva, Buddha, or whomever you wish. Then say, "God, here is a flower. I have not made the flower. I have no power to create a flower. I have really nothing, not a single thing I can call my own. But I take this little part of your creation and I give it back to you, charged with my love, my emotion and my devotion. Please accept my offering."

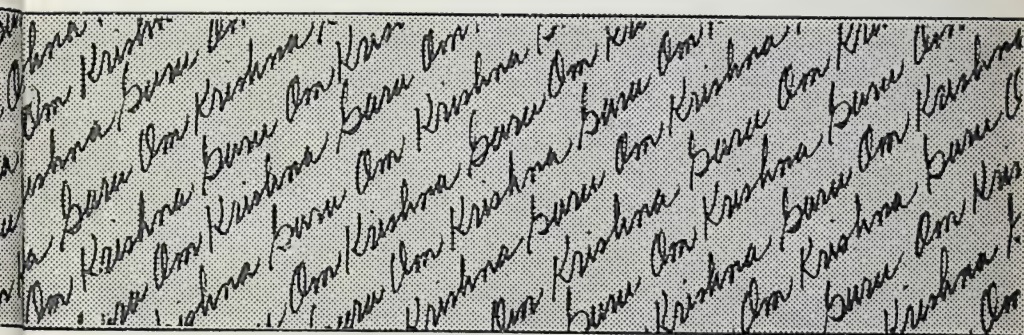
You could put flowers on your altar, burn a candle and say, "God, I wish you to accept the flowers as a symbol of my devotion; may the candle be a symbol of my false desires, may they be burned in the Light of Wisdom as this candle burns before my eyes."

Put a little vessel of water on the altar and leave it there for three months without renewing the water. Every day drink just one sip and wonder as you experience that the water stays fresh as you raise the vibrations of your mind because of your chanting and prayers. Let each sip of water be symbolic of the Mantras and prayers that will wash away the debris of the mind. You may find that water will remain fresh without being covered throughout the whole time of your spiritual practice. Do not be ashamed to perform such acts of worship. You have a right to expect a great deal, but you have to open the doors for these things to happen.

After some time is spent in cultivating the imagination through a variety of forms of worship, the mind may achieve a level of concentration in which it will willingly resort to more subtle images of the Divine, such as breath or Light.

Chapter Five

Benefits of Using a Mantra



The repetition of a Mantra is a means of improving the powers of concentration. There are Indian spiritual masters who maintain that the meaning and the content of the Mantra do not necessarily have to be understood by the aspirant in order to bring about the desired effect, that the practice of Mantra alone is sufficient to achieve the spiritual awakening which is its purpose. Certainly, the use of the Mantra purifies the subconscious and even if it is repeated mechanically some purification will take place. However, each Mantra is devotional by nature and has the Divine as its form and essence. With concentration on the meaning, the attainment of the ultimate goal is surer and quicker.

One of the results that comes quickly with the practice of Mantra is control of the breath which is the means by which we can

develop the ability to control the emotions. In chanting we can give all our emotions to the Mantra, to the deity of the Mantra, and ask that deity to help us gain control. In this way we find a safe release for negative feelings. Rather than throwing them on someone else, we offer them back to their source. Continued chanting will lead to greater awareness and the replacing of negative feelings with positive affirmations.

Mantra practice stills turbulent emotions and thereby stills the turbulent mind. In yogic terms there is a difference between emotions and feelings, since a purified emotion becomes a true feeling. Mantra Yoga gives an opportunity to know the emotions, what they are, where they come from and what their proper place is in our lives. Through Mantra Yoga we can learn to deal with the emotions properly, to control and refine them and to encourage the harmonious development of all aspects of the human potential.

When emotions are purified they develop into love, which is an important step in the awakening of further levels of consciousness. Feelings which have been purified bring us into the presence of the Divine and from the Divine we feel a sense of protection. The Mantra is like a shield against all that is negative and disturbing. It is not a magic pill, rather it is like a steady stream of water which gradually wears down the hardest stone.

Although you may have experienced fears, worries, loneliness, and had limited encounters with love and joy, do not despair. Even if your feelings are easily hurt, in that oversensitivity you have a wonderful, if as yet undeveloped, tool. As these negative emotions evolve into more refined feelings, you will find that your concepts of love and joy also change, and that such sensitivity is exactly what is needed to enter new dimensions of understanding on the path to Self-realization.

The voice can become an instrument for expressing and controlling the emotions. All stray thoughts and emotions should be offered with the chant, as though the singer were "telling all" to the Lord who is called upon. As thoughts crowd in, the intensity of chanting can be increased in a determination to surrender all to the Divine.

Your voice can be caressing, gentle, intense, full of longing or surrender. At other times it may be strong and powerful as you put into it all your anger and disappointment, your requests and demands. Honestly express to God what you feel, even your anger and impatience toward Him for not bringing you sooner to Him. In chanting out the emotions, from the ugliest to the most exalted, in giving them back to

the One who gave them to you in the first place, you learn to accept both parts of yourself, the good and the bad, and to transcend the pairs of opposites, from which we are trying to free ourselves. On the spiritual path, by channeling the emotions toward God, we find that He accepts our struggle and aids and sustains us in our search for Him.

Emotions in themselves are not bad, but when running wild they can be extremely damaging. Even love, when not shared, not given freely and generously, becomes self-love which turns destructively back on the individual. When emotions are directed, they are a source of strength for great achievements. Through the power of emotions men and women have overcome their limitations and attained a higher purpose in life. Emotions channeled through a Mantra towards the Divine can take you close to God.

As the Mantra is chanted, moods will in time be brought under control and awareness in the here and now will grow. Attention, and therefore energy, will be withdrawn from the old thought patterns that, like tapes on a tape recorder, play over and over. The mental background noises keep us tied to the past and future, to fearful imaginings and senseless fantasies, which cause our self-created sufferings. The energy will now be channeled to the Most High, to a positive affirmation of one's innermost Self.

Do not let the intellectual mind distract you from attempting the practice of Mantra and Japa. No amount of words or book knowledge can give you the experience. You have to practice yourself for their effect to be understood. The benefits depend on the individual, on where you start off, where you stand now, what your past lives have been, and the intensity and degree of longing in your desire. When you chant a Mantra your whole being changes for the better. Build up the habit of repeating the Mantra at all times. The work you do will become easier and more joyful because the Mantra is continuously in the back of your mind. If you repeat it while doing Hatha Yoga you will be able to penetrate the deeper levels of the asanas. Holding an asana, chant mentally, becoming absorbed in what you are doing. Gradually you will become aware of the pranic flow in the body, the deeper aspects of the asana and finally you will experience its mystical meaning.

If you have found your teacher, chant his or her name as an offering, an act of love. Channel the emotions by giving admiration and gratitude for the inspiration you have received. This offering and recognition of the divine spirit within the Guru will aid in developing

humility and overcoming the ego. Learning to surrender to the Mantra and to the energy of the Mantra puts in motion the process of purification of the self, facing up to and eliminating selfishness, self-glorification, self-justification and self-gratification.

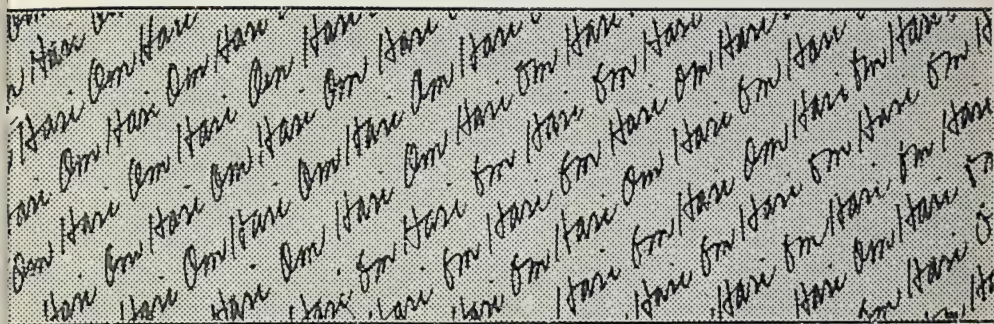
When chanting a Mantra the emotions express themselves in the breath and the voice. Every time the breath is uneven it means the emotions are involved and we are out of balance. As long as the emotions are running high, this imbalance exists, but gradually they subside and we begin to experience the equilibrium that is our goal. Then, as quietness descends, we can tune into the great rhythm of the Cosmos and become one with that rhythm. Chanting helps us to achieve this stillness by bringing the breath and the emotions under control. In these moments of complete stillness of the mind, indescribable bliss is experienced. By repeated practice it becomes possible to hold onto the contact made with your innermost being.

Through the use of Mantra a greater sensitivity, a refinement of the senses, comes about which may eventually bring you to the point where you can see with the inner eye and hear with the inner ear. When the inner ear is developed, the music of the spheres may be heard, music of such exquisite beauty as no instrument, no human voice, is able to produce. The Cosmic AUM might be heard. The impact and effects of such experiences will bring an intense desire to change for the better.

Through the practice of Mantra and Japa Yoga you will find yourself in direct confrontation with the lower self, the ego or "body-mind." You will become aware of those personality aspects that have been in control and have ruled your life. Now the Higher Self begins to take possession.

Chapter Six

How to Use the Mantra



One of the greatest problems in concentrating the human mind stems from the "mental background noises." These are an accumulation of influences from the world around us, memories and impressions that are triggered by the law of thought association. It is difficult to be completely quiet because we seem to be forever in the company of all these imprints which the mind has stored and turns out at random. When you first attempt to develop single-pointedness, you will become aware of this inability to keep the mind still. To deal with this, you can trick the mind into concentrating by a variety of techniques which vary the monotony without essentially changing the focus, by allowing the mind to be active within the framework of the Mantra.

Think of all the detail of chanting, how the sound is produced, the breathing, the effect of the sound on the body. Speed up the tempo of your chanting, including a greater number of repetitions within the span of one breath. Slow down the tempo, extending a name or syllable, stress the first syllable, or the last. (This is dealt with more specifically in the section on individual Mantras). Vary the voice from very loud, swelling the sound, to very soft and gentle. This kind of variety keeps the mind interested while still involving it fully and helps to keep the repetitions from becoming mechanical.

You may notice that your voice becomes smoother as you chant, that you can sing as you never could before. Delight in these improvements and put into your mind positive thoughts that you want to reach God by means of your voice, that you wish to be an instrument of God's love, and that the Mantra you chant will be of help to those in need. In this way you are master of the situation rather than becoming the slave of intellectual doubts and false pride. Watch the flow of your breath and its relation to emotions to understand the difference between expressing them and indulging in them. Indulgence indicates that you have become the victim of undisciplined emotions.

When chanting we often get in touch with emotions we did not know we had and tears that have been held back from childhood will come flooding out. You must use discrimination to recognize when these become tears of self-pity and deny yourself that indulgence. Sometimes the tears will be part regret and part joy — that the soul is at last on its way back home, regret that so many lifetimes have been wasted. Symbolically collect your tears, whatever their origin, and offer them to the Divine. Or wash the feet of Divine Mother with your tears.

Realize also that we cannot control the emotions through sheer will-power and when they are too strong, give them back to God, ask Him for help as a child asks its mother. At that moment, when you cry out from the depths of your being, you are most sincere and you are single-pointed in your anger, disappointment, or anguish. In doing this, you will experience true humility, perhaps for the first time. You can be either God's child or God's servant. If you are the kind of person to whom pleasing others is important, be God's servant. Then He is your Master; please Him. Offer yourself as an instrument through which He can love others. As you try to become more pleasing to God, you will find that His love comes to you through people, who are His creation. If God can love you, everybody can love you.

Combine formal Mantra practice with daily reflection and the keeping of a spiritual diary. This will help you to cultivate awareness and make the necessary changes in daily life to remove all aspects of egoism. The diary will also provide a record of mental reactions to the practice and the obstacles encountered, as well as the changes you observe within yourself and any experiences you may have. It is only by keeping a close watch on your practice over the entire period that a full understanding, not only of the Mantra, but also of the functioning of the mind will be achieved. Knowing the impasses the mind encounters and also how it can overcome them can be very helpful in any situation in life.

Try this experiment: chant your Mantra and watch your dreams. Do this for a definite length of time — you are working with the laboratory of your mind, and you must allow a reasonable period of effort to give it a fair trial. You cannot become a saint in a weekend. It takes nine months for a baby to be born and many more years to grow into an adult; the beginner on the spiritual path is like a spiritual baby.

Chanting is an individual matter and each person has a right to his or her own understanding. There can be no hard and fast rules. If you seek God, it is like a love affair between you and God. As you approach the Most High you grow and your understanding grows. You approach Truth differently, gaining new perspective and insights.

The power of the Mantra becomes most effective when practiced regularly and for a sufficient period of time — that is, until you get results. How long you chant at one time or how frequently is your decision.

When you begin chanting you will find that a wave of enthusiasm carries you through the first period. Unfortunately, this soon passes as the mind wants a change, something new. Mantra practice is upsetting to the mind, forcing it out of its normal habits into a very narrow path, making it single-pointed through discipline, and cutting the attachments to which it has clung. Like a child with new toys, the mind has a tendency to flit from one thing to another without discrimination. But the true reward will come only by perseverance and practice; only then will its secret be discovered, its mystery and power revealed.

Awareness is essential; mere dreaming during the chanting will not "light the fire that consumes." With application, with the purifying of the emotions and the mind more single-pointed, stillness will ensue and a sense of the "ever-present Presence" may be felt.

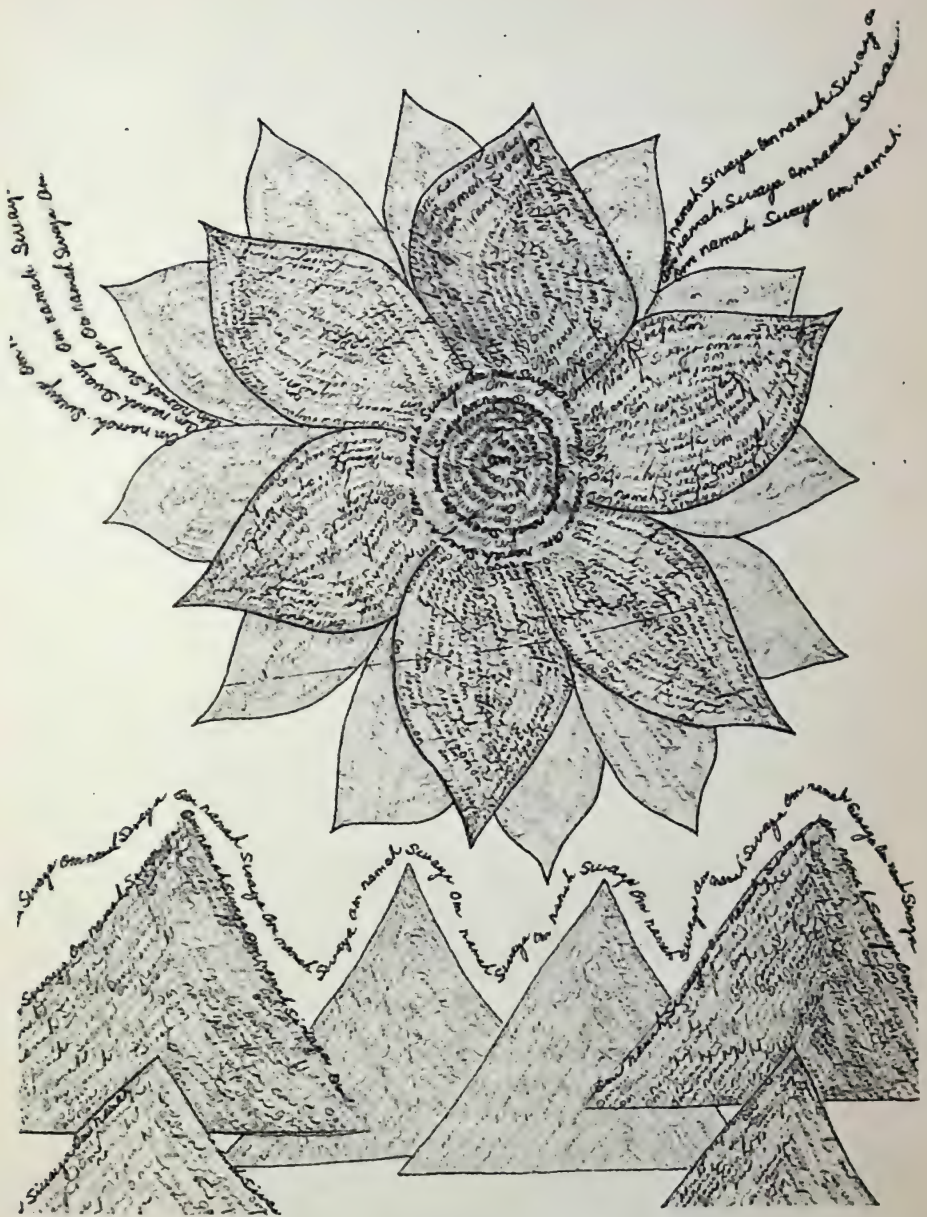
Record the changing reactions of the mind in your spiritual diary. After the first wave of enthusiasm there comes rebellion and opposition. The first critical point is at the end of two weeks, then three months, then two years. If you know the pattern ahead of time, you can take precautions.

The mind is like an elephant. You cannot force an elephant to move rigidly along a fixed line, but you keep the reins in your hand and allow him to sway a little from side to side. You don't let him go sight-seeing and forget his destination. Similarly, you can give the mind a little leeway but do not let it go entirely its own way.

When the practice of Mantra goes on for several hours at a stretch, mental chanting as well as the various forms of Japa can be alternated in order to maintain concentration. Mental repetition is considered by some Yogis the most powerful form but for many people the audible chanting which helps to express emotions is more successful while the mind is still very active. At a much later stage the mental repetition will be found more potent. Sometimes it is a good idea to recite the Mantra mentally when you are in the presence of others. This will restrain the urge to show off. When the awareness of this desire arises, say "thank you," because such awareness will increase when gratitude is felt. As the Mantra is put into the subconscious, the mind is purified to an extent of which we would be incapable without this aid. So the power of the Mantra is a great protection from fear. Slowly the ego is overpowered by the Higher Self. It is like pouring milk into black coffee until, little by little, it becomes pure milk.

Another variation is Likhita Japa, in which the Mantra is written down in lines like sentences, or in shapes and forms, as in the diagram of a lotus, or a cross, or in any design that will help to reinforce your devotions. One uniform system of writing will help concentration. If you work in an office, it is an excellent way of using any free time for your spiritual development, rather than wasting it in socializing. Writing the Mantra may also be alternated with other forms of Japa to maintain the focus on the Mantra, while providing variation to keep the mind interested. Keep all sheets of paper or notebooks in which you have written the Mantra, because these things have a very subtle effect on the subconscious. Keep them near your bed or on your altar.

You may find that different forms of Japa are effective at different times. Whatever form you are using, take the first few minutes of



An example of Likhita Japa using the Mantra
Om Namah Sivaya in floral form.

your practice to get the mind in order, to focus the feelings and emotions on what you are doing. Then direct all your efforts to the glorification of God, expressing your feelings of gratitude for having received knowledge of this practice and being able to help yourself. This attitude may not always be possible for you. If it is not, acknowledge your negativity and offer it to the Divine. Remember that being involved with God, even in anger, is better than being lukewarm and indifferent.

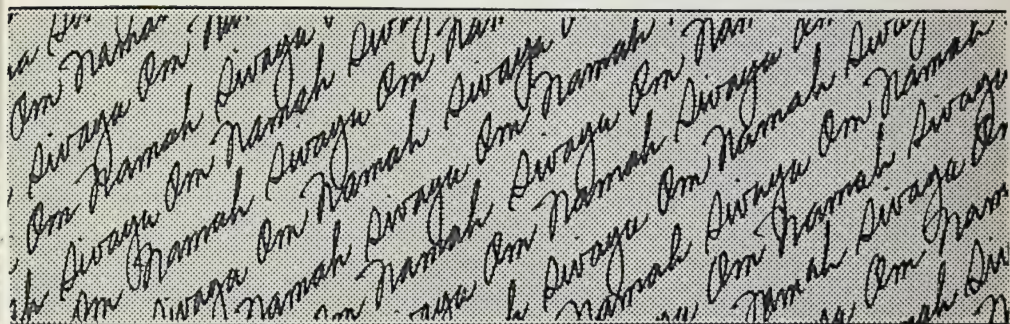
Later, when the practice is established, you will find that inspiration, the answers to your prayers, will come when you have finally surrendered, when you have chanted or repeated the Mantra to the point that the mind is exhausted. It is like the scientist in the laboratory who has tried and tried and when he finally lets go of his reasoning, inspiration comes.

If, after a year or two of practice, there emerges by itself a different way of practicing Mantra Yoga, it should not be suppressed. This may be guidance from a higher level. But make sure it is not the ego that wants to have its own way. First do your practice the way you have been taught and see what the results are. Then allow yourself to try and see if the same results can be reached in a different way. If changes are made too soon, based on assumption rather than experience, the results cannot be obtained. Dig one deep well rather than many shallow ones. Only when, through expanding awareness, you realize that one lesson is completed, are you ready to move on to another.

If you are completely serious in your efforts, extended Mantra chanting brings steadily deepening God-communion and release from emotional imbalance, bringing the self into harmony with the Self.

Chapter Seven

Practice and Understanding of Individual Mantras



The mind is creative; as soon as you give it some material it weaves with it a pattern all its own. This can be easily mistaken during chanting as coming from some higher divine source. The advantage of not knowing what the Mantra means is that the mind has nothing to work on. Then, when the Mantra does reveal itself to you, there will be no doubt of its meaning. Although an intellectual explanation encompasses only a small part of its significance, knowing the meaning, while understanding the creativity of the mind, may hasten the revelation.

The Cosmic sound *AUM*, or its condensed form *OM*, is the origin of all other sounds and is itself a Mantra. It is called the *Pranava* or sacred syllable, and symbolizes Brahman or the essential spiritual reality. The Mantra *AUM* gives birth to rays of Light, bringing illumination to the mind.

All sounds are blended into the beautiful Cosmic AUM, which can reverberate in the hearts of men and women. Mantra is speech most profound, sound at its purest, and when that supreme sound of Om becomes sovereign, it takes you past the little selfish ego, so that you are clothed in new cloth of thought and sound. You will be lifted beyond all other existence and when you speak, you will hear the sound of the Self, your innermost Being.

The flute of Lord Krishna is also symbolic for the Pranava. By the sound of His flute, Krishna created the world, and with its sound, He calls His devotees back to their heavenly home. Like the flute, the devotee must be empty, with egoism and self-importance removed. In that perfect and complete surrender, the mortal aspect, the self-will, becomes merged with the Divine and blends in joy and harmony, producing a sound of great inspiration, the Cosmic sound of AUM. Swami Sivananda has said that in this kind of self-surrender, which comes from the very core of one's heart, spiritual practice or Sadhana is not necessary, because one has truly become the Lord's property, the flute of Lord Krishna.

AUM must be chanted in three parts, with equal time given to each part; *Ah* is chanted in the region of the navel, *OO* in the sternum and *MM* in the throat.

Here is an example of a meditation you can use, and which can help you develop your own, to gain understanding and insights into this Mantra. When you chant *Ah*, place the sound at the navel or solar plexus. Visualize a lotus representing life itself. See a fluctuation of light energy on its petals. Imagine a change in colour from bright red to that of rain clouds. Allow these fluctuations to move, almost as if they have a life of their own. Think of them as symbolic for changing moods. Now see the tips of the lotus petals become faint pink, then let the lotus gradually become a shimmering white. Think of this as the Divine Light of insights, understanding and love dispersing the rain clouds of ignorance.

As the Light expands, let the next lotus, the Heart Centre, come into focus.

Chant *OO* and place the sound at the area of the sternum. See the petals as red at the centre of this lotus, pink in the middle and with the tips becoming clear white. As you chant, think of how refined the emotions can become when cultivated by such practices as this.

When the last letter, the *M*, is chanted with closed lips, you will

become aware of your physical response and vibration of the many, many cells of your body. When you chant, listen with great attention and contemplate the innate power of sound and its ability to manifest. This will lead to hearing the Cosmic AUM which is not a physical experience, but one that is heard by the inner ear, always the right. M becomes symbolic for surrender and for the response of the body as it reverberates to Pranavanada, the sound of the Most High.

The chanting of AUM will purify the mind, destroy all evil, all egoism. *AUM* represents the trinity of the physical, mental and spiritual bodies; waking consciousness, dream consciousness and dreamless sleep; and also individual, universal and transcendental consciousness.

Listening to the sound of Lord Krishna's flute, all consciousness is submerged in the Divine. Listening to the reverberations of the *OM* within, the devotee becomes Divine. In the chanting of *OM* one empties oneself and is filled with an essence that is beyond description.

Krishna Invocation

The name of Krishna may be invoked and used as a Mantra. The *Krishna Invocation* contains an allegorical story with the sequence of notes resembling the crying of a child for its father or mother. The devotee is a child of God, and just as the child calls out for its parent, the devotee cries for God in the manifestation of Lord Krishna. Krishna may also be seen as the Cosmic Lover, or as the Oversoul, with the singer as the soul in search of the Lord.

This Mantra begins at a low tone and works up gradually, like the child who does not get an immediate response, until there is the realization that attention cannot be commanded of either the parent or of God. Then there is resignation as the voice drops. But soon the demands start again with strength and energy, feelings and emotions. Just as the human mother or father knows and responds only to the real cry for help, so God pays little attention to us as long as we are caught up with our wordly games and toys, the cars, houses, position, achievements.

The devotee must learn that Lord Krishna cannot be commanded, and will not produce a vision or spiritual experience at the individual's convenience. When there is surrender to the fact that God comes in His own time, and when the flood of uncontrolled emotions is cleared

away, only then, in that silence there may come a response. This Mantra is a devotional fire that consumes the emotional dross, brings the heart to pure longing, the mind to stillness, and the soul to peace.

Om Krishna Guru

Om Krishna Guru is especially helpful if you are seeking a teacher. Its practice can bring you to your Guru.

The Mantra begins with Om, the Supreme, beyond all names and forms, the Supreme Energy, the essence of all Energy. Krishna is this Energy manifested in shape and form for the convenience of the human mind. The impersonal power thus becomes personalized. Siva, Krishna, even Jesus, are all creations of the human mind, manifestations of the Supreme Energy. If you want to love God, you can only love that power when it manifests as creation. Loving God means loving people, loving plants, loving animals, loving all that you think of as God's creation. This may be difficult, but we can begin by having reverence for life in all its forms.

Lord Krishna is always shown standing when He plays the flute, His body making a cross. This means that He is lenient with human frailties, but it also symbolizes the control of the three gunas of this world. Very often He is shown standing on a Lotus or with one flowering near Him. The Lotus is untainted by the muddy water in which it grows; the inner Light of every human being is untainted; the universe is untainted. The dark blue colour of Krishna signifies the unknown; although He is in human form, the Divine can never be known in its entirety.

Guru is the spiritual teacher, the one who dispels our ignorance and brings us to the Light.

Radhe Govinda

Radhe Govinda is a charming representation of emotions and the spiritual search, and the relationship of the individual soul to the Oversoul. Govinda means "the one who tended the cows" and is another name for Lord Krishna, just as Jesus is sometimes called the Good Shepherd, the Christ, the Nazarene. Radha is His mortal companion, who through her unceasing love for God became the symbol of the soul in search of her Lord, the Overself.

When love has become Cosmic, it no longer has a "because" attached to it. The human relationship can have these divine qualities when the love for God obliterates self-centeredness. The story of this Mantra, like the Krishna Invocation, displays an understanding of human nature and an acceptance of it as the vehicle through which we reach the Divine.

Radha calls for Krishna and they play a game of hide-and-seek. Krishna withdraws, Radha searches. He returns, but keeps disappearing and reappearing. Radha becomes bored and drops the search; she is distracted and petulant. Now it is Krishna's turn to take the initiative and win over Radha. This is to reveal and to illustrate the sublime truth that God loves his devotee at least as much as the devotee loves Him.

The chanting of the Radhe Govinda Mantra should be infused with the most intense feelings of love; it should be sung with God-centered aspiration: to find God within, which deepens that love; to find God in all mankind, which broadens that love.

Ave Maria

Ave Maria, although not as short as some of the Indian ones, will produce similar results when used as a Mantra. In Hindu mythology and religious thought the female principle is seen as the creative power through which the universe is manifested. In Christian terms, the *Ave Maria*, the Hail Mary, is worshipping the mother, the love aspect of the Divine. This brings out the noblest feelings in the human being. In Hindu teachings, the seeker can approach the ultimate spirit of God, which is beyond all manifestation, only through the mother principle of the manifested universe. The devotee who wants to enter the house of the Lord has first to go to Divine Mother for the keys — love and devotion — before entry can be attained.

The *Ave Maria* creates a deep feeling of love for the Divine. It will bring you in contact with Divine Mother Herself. Dedicate the chanting to those whom you wish to bless.

Hari Om

Hari Om is the healing Mantra. *Hari* is a name for Vishnu, the preserving aspect of the Supreme Spirit. Krishna is also an aspect of the preserving or sustaining force, and so *Hari* may be thought of as

the healing aspect of Lord Krishna. God assumes many aspects in order to provide us with the means of tackling our difficulties in a variety of ways, according to individual characteristics and temperament.

In Sanskrit, *Hari* means "to take away." Vishnu takes away the consequences of offences, errors and follies, when there is repentance. These are the impurities that bring about grief and sickness. If they are removed, health and strength are conserved for spiritual endeavours.

Om or *AUM* is the Hindu trinity, which here means creation, preservation, and destruction: the generation within us of that which is pure, sacred and noble; the sustaining and strengthening of these qualities; and dissolving all that is impure and negative.

This Mantra calls on Vishnu (or Lord Krishna) to preserve the human body and the mind in the best state of health for the purpose of finding Self-realization, attaining to the *Om*, the very Cosmic concept that absorbs all aspects in One, finally becoming formless.

The *Hari Om* Mantra is most powerful from midnight until three o'clock in the morning. At this time the vibrations are calm and mental activity is less. This is the time at which you are most likely to have a spiritual experience.

Since the science of sound and breath control applies to any religion, Christians can chant "Jesus Christ" to the tune of *Hari Om*, while Jews can use "Adonai" or "Elohim." A Buddhist might choose one of the names of Lord Buddha; or you can chant to Divine Mother, or use any one of Her 108 names such as Radha, Lakshmi or Saraswati. When a spontaneous feeling of gratitude wells up towards your teacher or Guru, this may be expressed by using that name as a way of blessing and giving thanks for all that has been received. You can go from one to another of these names, in order to give greater variety to the chanting, without changing the notes and the key in which the Mantra is sung.

Through the various ways in which it can be chanted, *Hari Om* is effective in efforts to make the mind single-pointed. To control the restlessness of the mind and overcome feelings of doubt, changes may be made by stressing syllables or sounds differently, while keeping the melody the same. Here are some possibilities:

- a. Soft voice, normal breath comes slowly under control.
- b. Sing full sequence of Mantra in one breath, so the concentration is again gathered, like light through a magnifying glass, to become

single-pointed, and returned to the Mantra. Continue chanting for as long as you can keep the concentration single-pointed. If the mind begins to behave like a monkey, jumping here and there, then it is time to make a change once more.

- c. Chant two sequences in one breath. This will again help to bring concentration back to the Mantra. When it begins to wane it is time to attempt three Mantras in one breath.
- d. When thoughts crowd in and you cannot keep them out by any effort of will, try another change. Express your distress by emphasizing the "ee" in *Hari Om*.
- e. Another variation is to stress the Om, extending the sound as long as possible.
- f. Stress the "ha," with emphasis on the breath and tension of the muscles in the region of the solar plexus. Link this with the mind and throw out everything that is negative.

Om Namah Sivaya

In this Mantra the devotee appeals to God in His aspect as destroyer of all ignorance and illusion that stands in the way of the divine Union. We need assistance in our efforts to overcome the ego. Self-centeredness cannot be mastered by sheer will-power; we must surrender and ask for divine help. Om Namah Sivaya is a call upon God to eliminate our negative qualities, to dissolve our difficulties and to destroy the obstacles to higher spiritual life. Siva is called "The Compassionate One," removing obstacles like selfishness and jealousy that impede our development. Lord Siva's destruction is really a blessing.

We must be prepared to have our concepts, our preconceived ideas, even our relationships destroyed. What we believe to be true and unshakeable today may be meaningless tomorrow. Some of our obstacles may be things to which we are very strongly attached. In seeking higher values, we have to ask, "Am I willing to pay the price?" The Most High is a pearl of great price. Attachment, whether to possessions, to name and fame, or to another individual, stands between the devotee and God.

Sometimes blessings come in disguise. An illness gives us time to be holy, time to think and to reflect on the purpose and direction of our life. Destruction on any level means turmoil and this is especially true on the spiritual level. But the old must be destroyed to make way for

the new and in chanting this Mantra the devotee is asking Siva to perform this kind of destruction.

However, a mistake can be made in concentrating on the destructive aspect without invoking a feeling of gratitude that help is being given to overcome the obstacles. This involves two important human emotions: humility, to recognize that one needs help, and gratitude that, whenever it is sincerely asked for, this help is given. Imagine yourself driving along a road that has many potholes. Then someone appears ahead of you and begins filling in the holes. You would stop concentrating on the holes and instead feel grateful to the person who is filling them.

It is helpful to have a picture or image of Siva in your room and put fresh white flowers in front of it. The image of Lord Siva, sitting in silence in a rigid position on Mount Kailas in the snowy regions of the Himalayas is a symbol for the state of complete silence and motionlessness that follows the destruction of emotional attachments and fears.

Om Sri Rama Jaya Rama

Om Sri Rama Jaya Rama Jaya Jaya Rama is a call to victory for the spiritual Self. *Rama* means one who delights in the consciousness of the spiritual Self. *Jaya* means "hail" or "victory." *Rama* represents the aspect of God as king and ruler of the universe. If you want to be God's servant, to carry out His will and accept Him as king, then chant this Mantra. It is used to evoke the power that leads to victory for the spiritual Self; that it may obtain realization of the God within.

Although not a literal translation, the words "I am Thine, all is Thine, Thy Will be done O Lord" are in the spirit of the Mantra. They are an example of following inner inspiration and intuition to give the meaning in a different language.

Swami Ramdas, a saint of modern India, who toured the West in 1954 and died in 1963, concentrated his search for God-realization in the chanting of the Ram Mantra. He initiated all his devotees into the name of Ram, and had a deep relationship with God in the aspect of Ram. He talked to Ram and in moments of danger would ask, "Now, Ram, how are you going to save me? Or are you going to destroy me?" One day he was commanded by God to write down his experiences, and they can be obtained from his Ashram in India.

There are different types of Mantras which have the purpose of achieving different goals. Some Mantras promise power or material benefits. For example, the verses of the *Ananda Lahari* by Sankara of the first century A.D.† are mainly a description and glorification of the Hindu Divine Mother, the female aspect of God. Saraswati is God as Divine Mother in the aspect of beauty, music and learning. The verses usually consist of four lines and each verse has a specific *yantra* (abstract representation of the Divine). Divine Mother's power is expressed on many levels: one verse may be recited to gain the power to foresee the future through dreams; another may bring immunity from famine and pestilence; still others will remove sterility, cure consumption, or charm snakes.

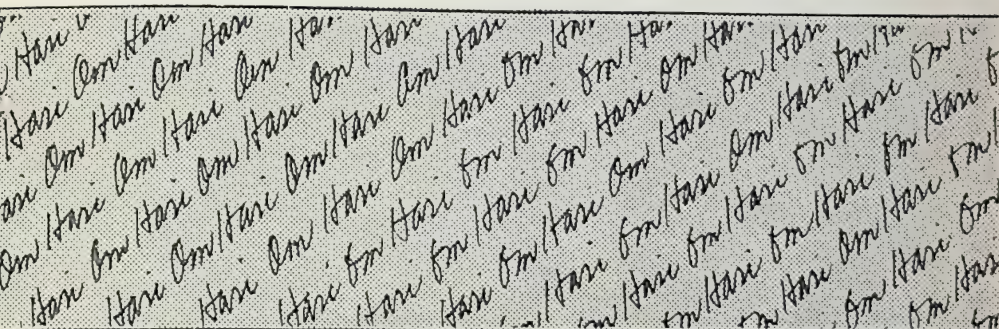
However, the Mantras which have been discussed in this presentation are Mantras of the heart that are used as short formulas to bring about single-pointedness of mind for the purpose of achieving Self-realization.

†Translation and commentary by Swami Sivananda, 4th ed Rishikesh, 1949.

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Chapter Eight

Mantra and Healing



There are many theories concerning healing, but your own observation and your own growing understanding will bring to you, your own unique insights. With our limited minds, functioning only on the three dimensional plane, we cannot really grasp all the law of the Divine, or the extended law of nature, nor understand the complicated causes of illness.

However, by chanting or praying with single-pointedness of mind, by reinforcing that concentration with action, by directing the will, healing will take place naturally within ourselves. Mantras can have a healing effect by releasing the emotions and bringing about a state of calmness and deep relaxation both in the chanter and in anyone listening. With the mind relaxed, the source of the disease and the hidden roots of conflict may come to the surface where they can be dealt

with. But we must know what we want to be healthy for, what we will do with the remainder of life if health is restored. We must be single-pointed in our desire. There may be advantages to being ill which, although we might not admit them consciously, our ego wants to hold onto. By enforcing our will and giving strength to that part which wants to be well, this polarity of the mind can be overcome, permitting healing to take place.

There is a Mantra, *Aham Brahmasmi*, which means "I am Brahman" or "I am God." This may seem a strange thought but a person becomes what he thinks. If you think you are a failure, you will become a failure. Conversely, if you continually chant *Aham Brahmasmi* you will eventually realize your Divine nature and there will be little room for sickness at any level — physical, emotional or mental. If you are to chant this Mantra, it is important that you clarify in your own mind what the meaning of God is to you. You must also do serious self-purification, and the rest of your life must reflect this purification. You must develop the ability to surrender to the Mantra and to the energy that comes from it. You must have the humility to be able to ask for forgiveness and apologize to others if you are in the wrong.

Besides the ego's need for attention which perpetuates illness, and lack of humility which indicates a wrong attitude, there are many other factors which may interfere when you do spiritual practices for your own healing. You may have a lesson to learn, and so healing may not be what is best for you; you may be eating the wrong food, or violating certain laws of nature to which your body is subject. You may hold an unhealthy belief that you are too great a sinner to deserve to be healed. You may also lack awareness that you are hurting others and unconsciously punishing yourself for their pain. The complexity of the human mind and its capacity for pain is so tremendous that we must beware of over-simplification. Pain is a great teacher, but we must understand its message and deal with that before the way is clear for health to be restored.

All this must be remembered also in regard to the healing of others. It may be necessary for the person to experience pain or go through an illness in order to have the time to reflect, to develop humility and devotion, and to overcome selfishness. Perhaps a physical healing can take place only after the mind has been healed. You cannot know the purpose of an ailment, or its possible cause, nor can you know what is best for the person. But you may offer a prayer or chant Mantras, letting the power of the Mantra itself work. Chanting can be an

expression of your sincere concern, although you must not decide how this help should be given.

When you chant or recite a Mantra for someone, visualize that person well and healthy. Do not picture the individual in a sick state, as such an image has remarkable power. Instead, invoke the image of Hari or Krishna or Siva or Jesus and, in full expectation, see the person standing in the radiance of Light. Let the healing force flow through you, never from you, and think of the energy of the Mantra as that healing Light. Wrap the individual in a spiral of this Light so that he or she becomes barely visible and let the image of this spiral move to the source of all Light.† Now focus all your attention on the chanting.

What takes place when we chant a Mantra? We attract spiritual power and we offer ourselves as a channel for this power, that it may work through us to the sick person and do whatever is necessary. We must not demand healing, nor tell God how to accomplish it — when, how quickly, in what way. We do not know what karma has to be paid off, or what lessons have to be learned. Healing is not a hit-or-miss affair, even though to human perception it may seem so.

Most spiritual healers find, for a variety of reasons, that not everyone benefits. Sometimes a person who appears to be a disbeliever is healed while a believer is not. This may be because the subconscious convictions of these people are exactly opposite to what they proclaim. The receptivity of the person to be healed is an important element.

The healer must surrender to God, to the Cosmic healing forces, making sure that no personal opinion is held, no judgment made. Only by invoking all the compassion of which you are capable will you be able to apply or direct or invoke the healing power of the Mantra.

How does one develop compassion? Observe yourself, practise awareness in order to gain understanding of yourself. Wrong conduct must be discarded, not condemned. When you see and forgive your own failures, you will be ready to forgive the failings of others and have more understanding for those you wish to heal. In the process of healing we meet ourselves. Jesus told us to forgive "seventy times seven." He meant us to forgive always, and not to sit in the judgment seat for ourselves or for others.

When you attempt to heal someone, first invoke all the feeling of compassion possible, chant the Mantra, and fill yourself with this vibration, attracting the forces of the Mantra and channeling them, directing them toward the sick person. If you feel that the vibration

flows out from the tips of the fingers or the palms, you may hold your hands above the person. Or you can mentally open the doors of your heart and let it flow through. With this vibration flows your own love and this is evidence of your willingness to help. Always put sick persons at ease, helping them to accept themselves without the feeling of being burdened with sin. Healing will not take place with the attitude of "unworthy sinner."

Confidence will come with success, but do not become overconfident and think that healing will always take place. The Mantra could overcome anything if the person would recite it, or receive it, as a paying off of Karma, with trust in forgiveness, and a readiness to alter the course of their life and dedicate it to serving God. Even when a healing has come about, a sickness might come back with greater force if the person who was healed does not change a selfish or hurtful way of life. Gratitude to the Divine must be shown in charity or selfless service to others.

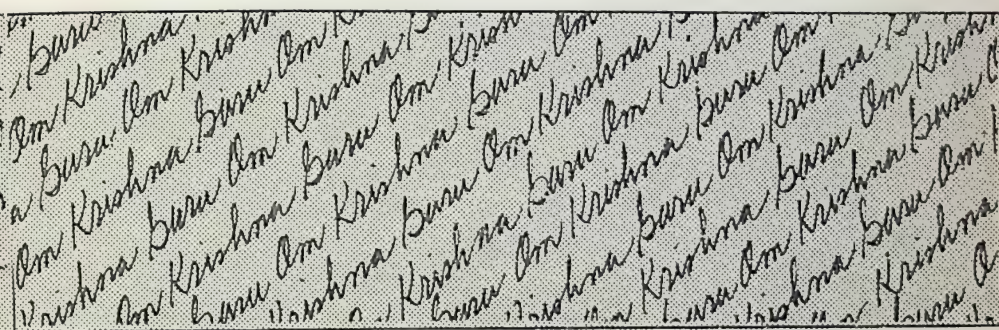
Record the results of your efforts in order to increase your understanding of the law of healing. When we call up the spiritual forces we attract through the vibration of a certain sound or a Mantra, one particular aspect of the Cosmic Light that is suitable for specific healing, but perhaps not for all. Much will depend on the makeup of the person who is ill. The influence of such a healing ray can be rejected by the one who is expected to receive it. This does not necessarily take place in the conscious mind but may be a subconscious rejection because of the idea of being unworthy, or of being too great a sinner to expect forgiveness. Sometimes healing is expected too quickly and we give up before it can take place. Not all healing can or should be instantaneous.

When we chant a mantra we definitely change the sick person's state of mind. We can relax them and gently probe into the depths of the soul or the mind to find out what resistance we may have to deal with. We can try to help to lift their burdens. Perhaps we can point out that we really can trust the Divine, that we have many good reasons to do so.

May all of you who read this become channels of help and healing and goodness to many others. Bless you all.

Chapter Nine

Mantra and Initiation



Arise; awake; approach the teachers and know the Truth.

The person who is blessed with a teacher knows the Highest.

He whose devotion to the Lord is great and who has as much devotion to the teacher (Guru) as to the Lord, unto him, that high souled one, the meanings of the sacred texts stand revealed.

— Quoted from the Upanishads.

All sacred texts and spiritual Masters emphasize the need for a teacher on the spiritual Path. When you think you have found your Guru, take time to examine yourself and your motives. Do not desire initiation unless you have made up your mind that you want to accept the Teachings and that you will listen and obey. Put aside all worry that you might become dependent on

your teacher. A true Guru will lead you to the discovery of the Guru within — your own Higher Self.

Make no demands as to how your Guru should be and how you should be taught. Pray to the Divine that you will be led to a true Guru. Make a bargain with God: ask Him that the teacher who is your Guru by divine appointment will either say something special to you or greet you in a certain manner, giving you a particular present, leaf or a flower or a book, whatever you decide. But once you make a promise to God that you will accept that individual who comes to you with that special sign, you must keep your end of the bargain. The teacher will come when the student is ready.

When your choice has been made, if you feel that your Guru acts in a way that is not in accordance with your perceptions of spirituality and that you may have made a mistake, remember that the error may be in your perception. Say to the Lord, "I am confused. Is my time with this teacher over? Should I look for another Guru?" Then wait. If no sign comes, stay with the teacher you have, until the sign you have asked for is given.

A true initiation into a Mantra is like a spiritual marriage between Guru and disciple. It cannot be dissolved by the breaking up of the human relationship, it is only delayed and must be taken up and continued in another life, until the disciple has achieved Self-realization. Guru and disciple are always linked through the power of the Mantra. There is an obligation on both sides: the one who initiates accepts responsibility for the disciple, and the initiate must be ready to accept the guidance and authority of the Guru and feel that it is right to take the initiation. According to Swami Sivananda, although it is very difficult to find a teacher who will sincerely look after the interest of the pupil, it is also extremely difficult to find a disciple who will sincerely act according to the instructions of the Guru. His advice to aspirants is to equip themselves with the qualifications of sincerity, humility and devotion before approaching a Guru, and then not to use reason too much in the selection. For both parties the relationship is an intense one and, because of its duration and importance, must be cherished.

Only one who has practised intensively and has received the power of the Mantra can initiate. Otherwise there is nothing to pass on to the student, in the same way that a father can only bequeath to a child what he himself has already acquired.

Before the initiation, both student and teacher must examine their relationship to see if there is anything that could cause friction between them. These problems should be worked out first. Indeed the student should never accept an initiation until his or her worst weaknesses have been overcome. To again quote Swami Sivananda, "The reason for the early downfall of the majority of aspirants is that they imagine themselves to be qualified to adopt the highest form of Yoga at the beginning. The qualified aspirant will be humble enough to approach a Guru, surrender himself to the Guru and serve and learn from him."

In the initiation, or "Diksha," the Guru transmits to the student something of the power of the Mantra. Gurudev Sivananda says, "Initiation gives spiritual knowledge and destroys sin. As one lamp is lit at the flame of another, so the divine Sakti within Mantra is communicated from Guru to the disciple." This may be similar to a mild electric shock; it can also be experienced as ecstatic joy, like walking on clouds, lasting for several hours or even a few days. There can be various effects. The power of the Mantra becomes greater after the initiation and will become more perceptible to the disciple, increasing his or her sensitivity. The Mantra then becomes a self-generating force, propelling the disciple into union with the power of the Mantra. The effect on the recipient is dependent on the quality of love and depth of sincerity with which the power of the Mantra is transmitted.

The commitment that is involved in a Mantra initiation is not suitable or possible for everybody, but the ideals which it implies may be pursued just as earnestly by those who are not initiated. When you have received an initiation, there is a commitment to be frank and open with the Guru about the actions and plans of your life. This brings with it the positive aspect of the initiate having someone who cares and who will give advice in an objective manner. Many pitfalls and much pain are thereby avoided. But if this intention of a free exchange dies in the initial stages, it is an obvious signal to both parties that the relationship should be reassessed. There might have been, on the part of the initiate, false hopes of gaining powers or having exciting experiences. If this is the case, the sincerity of the decision must be questioned. Either the full meaning of initiation should be applied, or the relationship dissolved.

Karma will not take effect when there is agreement between participating individuals, assuring that there is no disappointment or pain to

either partner. This applies to ordinary marriage and we can therefore reasonably expect that it also applies, to some degree, to the mystical marriage of Mantra initiation.

A one-sided relationship is not really a relationship. There is no better way of describing the purpose and effectiveness of Mantra than in the words of the Parable of the Sower (Matthew XIII) in which Jesus speaks of the seeds (of Mantra or power) which fall along the path to be devoured by birds, those which fall on rocky ground where the roots wither away, or among thorns where they are choked, and the ones which fall on fertile ground where they grow and bring forth a good harvest.

There are many misconceptions surrounding the idea of initiation. Mantra initiation can take many forms. In India it may be given by a father or a mother to the child. This took place, for instance, in the life of Papa Ramdas, the renowned saint of Southern India. In these situations the parent is of high spiritual calibre and guides the children's steps with the aim of helping them find the same state of realization. This means that the home life is a highly spiritual one, with study of scriptures, recitation of sacred texts and invocation of Mantra, as part of daily living. The effect of such early training is deep and lasting. The parent who initiates a child does not have the goal of Sannyas in mind. (Papa Ramdas was not a Sannyasi). It is a blessing for the child and a different kind of Mantra is used.

Mantra initiation may also be given by a compassionate Guru to help an individual, not always on the basis of the recognition of great spiritual potential, but rather on that of need. There may be Karmic conditions which are difficult to deal with, and which would make a favourable birth in another lifetime questionable. One of the young fellows in Sivananda Ashram had a record for theft. When I became aware that he had been initiated by Swami Sivananda, I felt that this had been unwise and was puzzled how a Guru could have exercised so little caution. When I asked him why he would initiate such a person, his answer was that by accepting the individual and giving him an initiation he was helping that person to obtain better conditions in another life, and also to give support in the present struggle to overcome weaknesses.

In order for this effort of the Guru to be worthwhile such a disciple would have to possess true humility and a sense of gratitude. Unfortunately, this gratitude may be only temporarily expressed, soon to disappear as if in quicksand. It is clear that, regardless what the

problems are, the Divine Energies will always extend help and it is very foolish to allow pride to stand in the way of accepting and appreciating such a precious gift.

If a Mantra has been received in a dream, usually enough of it is experienced in the dream state to allow the aspirant to recognize the Guru. However, it is entirely at the discretion of the Guru whether or not an initiation will be given. There is no obligation for the Guru to give a Mantra in such cases. Nor is there an obligation just because of contact with a devotee for a number of years, even through living together in the Ashram of the Guru. It is not any kind of automatic promotion.

Sometimes Guru and disciple will meet again because of the promise of the Mantra. The disciple will also return when the Guru incarnates to help with the Work, to repay the time and effort that was spent with the disciple in previous lives. Before his death Ramakrishna indicated when and where he would come back. Those around him asked him jokingly how they would know him and he said that he would carry a hookah! One disciple remarked it would not matter to him because he was not going to return. Ramakrishna replied, "Oh, yes, you will. When the lotus flowers it brings along all the leaves, buds and flowers on the stem, for its completion." This illustrates the responsibility that also rests with the disciple, and makes it more clear why the Guru must be informed of actions, which may be contrary to the furthering of the Work.

The Mantra initiation is an essential first step if the aim is to become a Sannyasin. In Ashrams it is a rule of thumb that one is initiated by the Guru first into Mantra, followed a few years later by the Brahmacharya initiation, and then Sannyasa. The periods of time between these initiations are meant for intensive study, and for putting into practice what has been learned. The initiation into swami-hood gives the right to teach Vedanta and there are different orders which have certain distinctions.

As an example of the inflated ideas some aspirants have of their qualifications, one student was under the belief that he could be a teacher because he already felt like one and resented that others did not see him that way. He thought that his saintliness and greatness as a Guru might be purposely retarded by God in order to maintain his interest in helping and guiding others. This is a perverted way of thinking and is an escape from possible criticism for not having the development necessary to be a Guru. Such misconceptions may arise

from observing situations in which the Guru may purposefully joke or even pretend to be slow or stupid, in order to diminish the fear of some devotees. Or some may naturally, like Swami Purushotthamananda, be very childlike, able to take great joy in simple things and find humour in situations that would be unnoticed by others. The awe of the devotee is a hindrance for both Guru and disciple. In considering what qualifies one as a Guru, we can remember St. Augustine who was told "not yet" because there were a number of pleasures — women, debating — that he still enjoyed and was not willing to give up. He tells of this in his book, *Confessions of St. Augustine*.

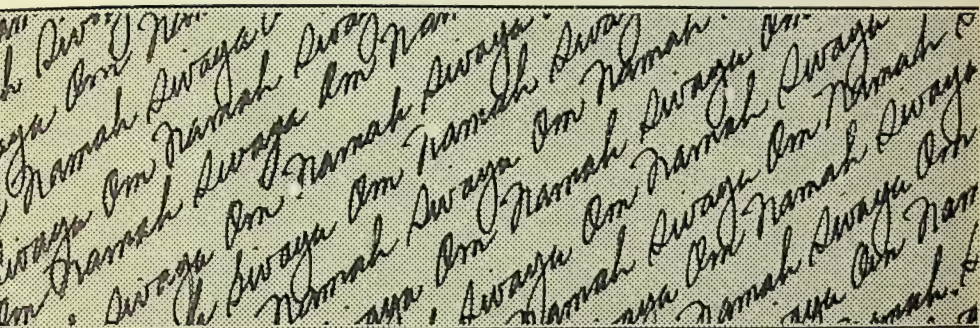
The accusation is made that Gurus dangle initiations before aspirants. If this is done, there is a certain objective in mind. There may be the desire to collect many initiates for emotional or economic purposes, although I have not personally encountered this. As in anything which involves human beings, there will always be good and bad Gurus. The human mind is capable of exploiting anything — the wars which have been fought in the name of various religions is proof of that.

However, this kind of "stick and carrot" method is applied by many parents; companies dangle promotions before people, so the thought is justified. But if such a suspicion is in the heart of the devotee, the wisest thing would be not to seek initiation from that Guru.

Aspirants often ask what would happen to the world if everyone became an initiate, took Brahmacharya or Sannyas. There is no danger of the world dying out, because there are too many people who want to keep the old games going.

Chapter Ten

Mantra in Daily Life



Whatever you achieve through your Mantra practice becomes knowledge which is indestructible. You may lose your life, but the knowledge remains and will reappear in another lifetime. Its purity depends upon how pure a channel you have made of yourself, to what extent you have put your ego aside. Feed your mind the finest food, as you feed your body the most healthful food. Bring quality into your life, refine your senses so that you may become more receptive to the Most High. Do not seek to acquire powers. Whatever the Divine is giving you as a gift or as a signpost that you are on the right path, do not seek to increase that power for some personal end. Do not seek to have power over others. Be grateful and give thanks to the Gurus who have gone before you, because they have opened and prepared the way.

When you feel critical of yourself or others, counteract this by chanting a Mantra in your mind. Let the Mantra truly take over and purify the mind and you will see the blessings that come to you. That effort may sometimes seem beyond your capabilities. When you feel that way, resort to prayer and ask for help. This is an act of humility, to realize that you cannot do it all by yourself. Those who have achieved Cosmic Consciousness before you will respond and bring you also close to that state.

Do not hesitate to cry at the feet of God about your unworthiness because God will make you worthy. If you have received a Mantra initiation there must be some worthiness, but it is your responsibility and obligation to demonstrate it. God and Guru work with you but they do not carry you, they do not work for you. Yoga is the path of revelation and liberation. You have to open the door.

When you chant the Name of God the work you do becomes easier, more joyful; it is no longer a distasteful duty because the Mantra will be continuously in the back of the mind, bringing the attention back to God and to the thought that God is working through your mind and hands.

By chanting or reciting, aloud or silently, you carry the force, the power of the Mantra and this power will be a blessing wherever you go. But remember that it is from the Mantra, not your personality, that the blessing comes. By mentally repeating your Mantra when others come to you with their problems, you prevent the thinking process from obstructing intuition. However, do not think that you always have to have the answer. You may not be the channel for this person, or your silence may be their best lesson at this point.

For people living an ordinary life in the world, all the practice and work in self-development will build a foundation for the time when they can pursue a more intense search for higher values and the spiritual goal. It is good to chant a Mantra while engaged in such routine tasks as washing dishes, scrubbing floors, or cutting the grass, because in these the mind is left relatively free and much energy can be wasted in allowing it to drift. These tasks provide an opportunity for self-purification.

At the end of the day do not watch the news or have an argument, or, at this most susceptible time, you will take the anger and violence into your dreams. Instead take a positive message with you when you go to sleep by playing a Mantra tape or chanting your Mantra. You can

train yourself to keep the Mantra with you all night during sleep. As you switch off the light, think that you are symbolically switching off all daily activity, then lie quietly and recite your Mantra. Soon the Mantra will take over because at this time, when the power of suggestion is at its strongest, the energy of the Mantra is most active.

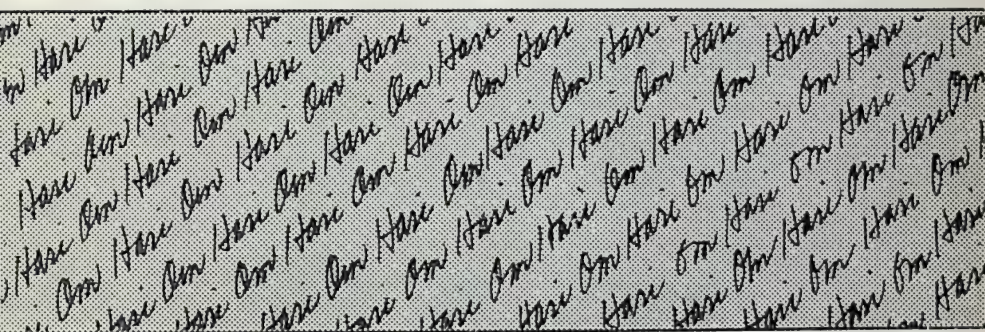
Learn to keep the Mantra going in your mind at all times. Use the various forms of Japa — Likhita, Vaikhari, Upamsu, Manasika — alternating them with chanting, depending on the occasion, or to give your busy mind the variety it wants. It does not matter if others think you strange to be writing or whispering to yourself. Be God's fool — the "Pearl of Great Price" is worth the price.

Practice until you get results. Do not give up! Yogananda once said, "A saint is a sinner who never gives up."

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Chapter Eleven

A Disciple: Faith Can Work Miracles



A Disciple — Faith Can Work Miracles from *Japa Yoga* by Swami Sivananda Sarasvati

A great Guru who lived in a temple on the bank of a broad river and had many hundreds of disciples all over, once summoned his disciples, saying that he wanted to see them before his death, which was to take place soon. The most favourite disciples of the great Guru, who always lived with him, grew anxious and kept themselves close to him day and night. For they thought that he might disclose to them at last the secret which made him so great, and all of them fearing lest they should miss the great opportunity, watchfully awaited the moment when the secret would be revealed. For, though their Guru taught them many sacred Mantras they acquired no powers and hence thought that the Guru still kept to himself the method which made him great. Disciples from everywhere arrived every hour and awaited with great expectation.

Now a humble disciple who lived far away on the opposite side of the river also came. But the river which was in high flood was too turbulent even to allow boats to pass. However, the humble disciple must not wait, as in the meanwhile the Guru may pass away. He should not

tarry; but what was to be done? He knew that the Mantra which his Guru taught was all-powerful and capable of doing anything. Such was his faith. So, chanting the Mantra with faith and devotion he walked over the river. All the disciples who saw this were surprised at his powers. And recognising him as the one who came long ago to their Guru and stayed but one day and went away after being taught something by him, all the disciples thought that the Guru had given him the secret. They sternly demanded of their Guru why he deceived them thus, though they served him in every humble manner for many years, and yielded the secret to a stranger who came there for a day, long ago.

The Guru, with a smile, waved them to be calm, and summoning the humble disciple to his presence, ordered him to tell the disciples what he was taught by him long ago. The anxious group of disciples was taken aback with amazement when they heard him utter the name of "Kudu-Kudu" with awe, veneration, and devotion. "Look," said the Guru, "in it he believed, and thought that he got the clue to all. And even so is he rewarded for his faith, concentration and devotion. But you always doubted, thinking that something remained unrevealed still, though I told you Mantras of great powers. This distracted your concentration, and the idea of a great secret was in your mind. You were constantly thinking about the imperfection of the Mantra. This unintentional and unnoticed concentration upon the imperfection made you imperfect."

The Disciple and the Temple

There was once a temple in a small mountain city near a holy river. The temple had a door that closed very firmly — and had no handle. The only way the door could be opened was by chanting the Lord's name. Every few years all the saints and sadhus were invited to come to the temple and take turns at sitting, chanting one of the names of God, before the temple doors. If God accepted their offering, He would Himself open the door.

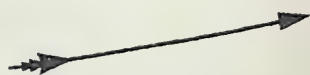
Now, not far from the city was a cave, in which was living a very famous Mantra singer, and a young man, and they shared their practice time together. They slept the same length of time, ate together and spent their meditation time together. The cave was very small so it was necessary for them to coordinate their activities so as not to disturb one another. And as they both worshipped the same aspect of God

there was a harmony between them as perfect as can be among spiritual people.

In accordance with tradition, they went to the temple and the opportunity to chant before the temple doors was given first to the older man. When his turn came, he sat before the door and sang his heart and soul out to God. After two weeks the doors opened with a bang.

So the younger man's turn came and he, too, sat before the temple doors and chanted. A week passed, two weeks, three weeks. According to the tradition no one was refused to sit before the temple door and chant, however long he may spend there. The young man chanted for a month, two months, and as the weeks went by three months passed. Then, suddenly, with a great clap of thunder, the doors of the temple burst open and everyone present was thrown to the ground by the shock.

The young man went home and sat under a tree and wept. He said, "Lord, am I so far away, so very far away from You that it has taken me this long to open the temple doors? What have I done? Please tell me." And the Lord granted His beloved devotee a vision and said, "Put aside all your worries, my child. I was so delighted with your singing that I forgot to open the door."

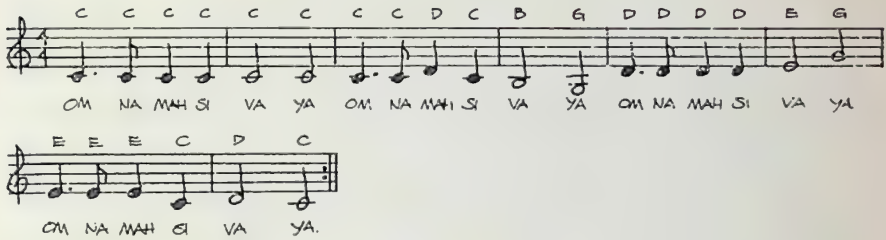


MANTRAS



On the banks of the Ganges Swami Venkatesananda plays the veena, Swami Radha the sitar and Swami Nada Brahmananda the tambura. These Indian musical instruments are mainly used while chanting Mantras and Bhajans to help the singer keep the correct tune.

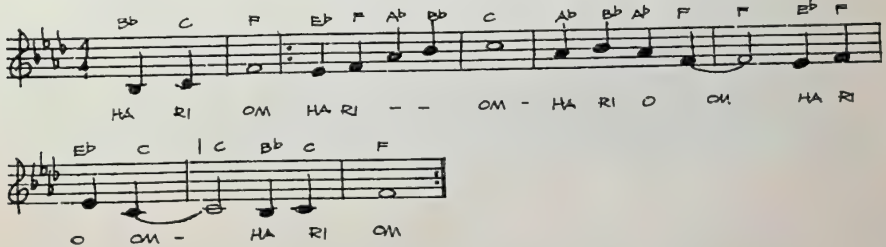
Om Namah Sivaya



Om Om Om Om



Hari Om





Swami Venkatesananda playing the veena for his guru, Swami Sivananda. This seemed to be Swamiji's way of "communicating without words."

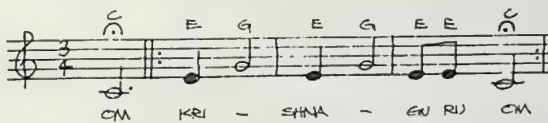
Radhe Govinda



Handwritten musical notation for the Radhe Govinda mantra. The notation is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is written on a single staff with notes and rests. Below the staff, the lyrics are written in a stylized font, with hyphens indicating the placement of notes. The lyrics are: RA - DHE GO VIN DA RA - DHE GO VIN DA - RA - DHE GO VIN DA BO LA RA - DHE GO VIN DA RA - DHE GO VIN DA RA - DHE GO VIN DA BO LA - RA - DHE.

RA - DHE GO VIN DA RA - DHE GO VIN DA - RA - DHE GO VIN DA
BO LA RA - DHE GO VIN DA RA - DHE GO VIN DA RA - DHE
GO VIN DA BO LA - RA - DHE

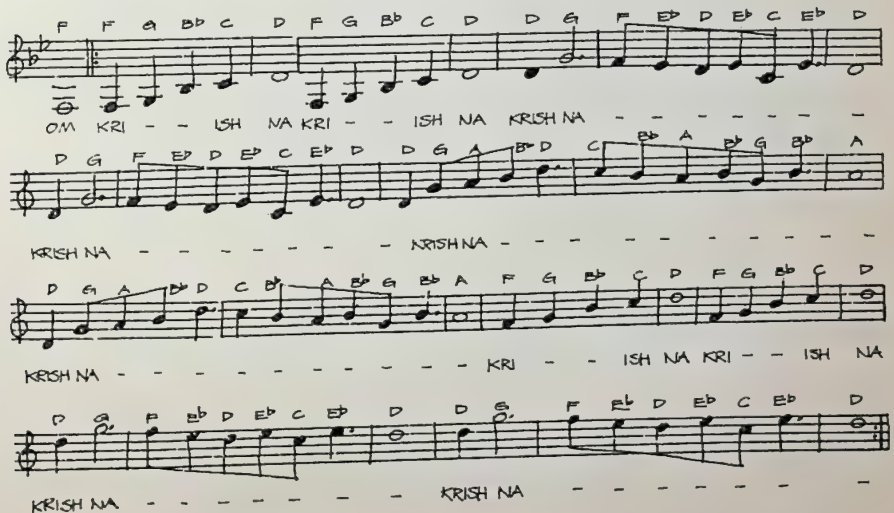
Om Krishna Guru



Handwritten musical notation for the Om Krishna Guru mantra. The notation is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. The melody is written on a single staff with notes and rests. Below the staff, the lyrics are written in a stylized font, with hyphens indicating the placement of notes. The lyrics are: OM KRI - SHNA - GU RU OM.

OM KRI - SHNA - GU RU OM

Krishna Invocation



Handwritten musical notation for the Krishna Invocation mantra. The notation is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is written on a single staff with notes and rests. Below the staff, the lyrics are written in a stylized font, with hyphens indicating the placement of notes. The lyrics are: OM KRI - - ISH NA KRI - - ISH NA KRISH NA - - - - - KRISH NA - - - - - KRISH NA - - - - - KRI - - ISH NA KRI - - ISH NA KRISH NA - - - - - KRISH NA - - - - -.

OM KRI - - ISH NA KRI - - ISH NA KRISH NA - - - - -
KRISH NA - - - - - KRISH NA - - - - -
KRISH NA - - - - - KRI - - ISH NA KRI - - ISH NA
KRISH NA - - - - - KRISH NA - - - - -



Swami Nada Brahmananda instructing Swami Radha in the use of the harmonium for chanting Mantras.

Ave Maria. . . Most Beautiful Mother

C F F A G F $\overset{F}{\underset{\cdot}{\text{A}}}$ A G G A G F $\overset{F}{\underset{\cdot}{\text{A}}}$ C F F A G



MOST BEAUTI FUL - MOTHER MY HEART IS ON - FIRE TO LOVE THEE AND -

F $\overset{F}{\underset{\cdot}{\text{A}}}$ A G G A G F $\text{B}\flat$ $\text{B}\flat$ A A G G C F



SERVE THEE IS ALL I DE - SIRE AV E AV E AV E MA RI A

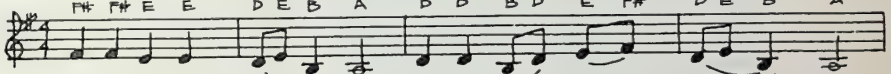
$\text{B}\flat$ $\text{B}\flat$ A A A G A G F



AV E AV E MA RI - - A


Namo Amitabha

F# F# E E D E B A D D B D E F# D E B A



NA MO A MI TA - - BHA NA MO A - MI - TA - - BHA

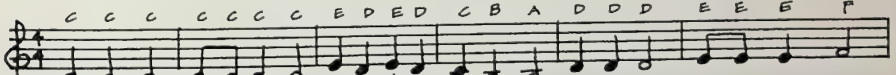
F# F# E E D E B A D D B D E F# D E B A



NA MO A MI TA - - BHA NA MO A - MI - TA - - BHA

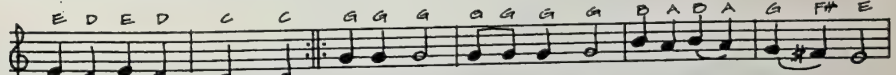
Om Namo Bhagavate

C C C C C C C E D E D C B A D D D E E E F



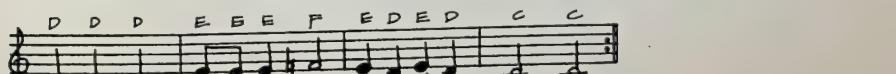
OM NA MO BHAGA VA TE VA SU DE - VAY - A OM NA MO BHAGA VA TE

E D E D C C G G G G G G G B A D A G F# E

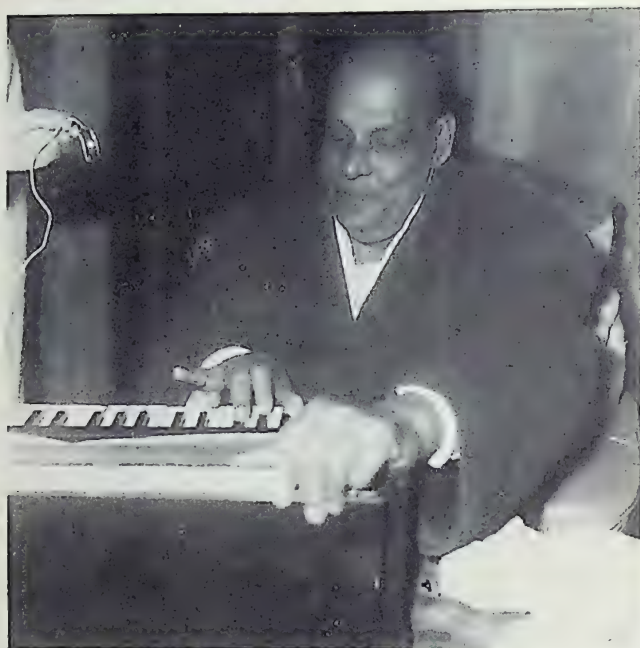


VA SU DE - VAY A OM NA MO BHAGA VA TE VA SU DE - VAY - A

D D D E E E F E D E D C C



OM NA MO BHAGA VA TE VA SU DE - VAY A



Swami Sivananda playing a harmonium, a specially developed instrument to bridge the gap between the scale of Indian music and Western music. Gurudev liked to chant. He felt that chanting was the greatest inspiration and also the best way of glorifying the Most High and cultivating the emotions into noble feelings.

Sri Rama Jay Ram

B B D B G A D D E D F# F# G E
SRI RAM A JAY RA AM JAY JAY RAM OM SRI RAM A JAY

D B G A D B G G E G G F# G E
RA AM JAY JAY RAM OM SRI RAM A JAY RAM JAY JAY RAM

D F# F# G E D B G A D B
OM SRI RAM A JAY RA AM JAY JAY RAM OM

Om Sri Ram

E F# G# F# G# F# G# F# E F# D# E F#
OM SRI RAM JAY RAM JAY JAY A RAM OM SRI RAM JAY

D# E F# E E E
RAM JAY JAY A RAM OM

I am Thine, All is Thine

F# F# G# F# F# G# F# G# F# E E F# D# D#
I AM THINE ALL IS THINE THY WILL BE DONE OH LORD I AM

E F# F# D# E F# E E E E
THINE ALL IS THINE, THY WILL BE DONE OH LORD

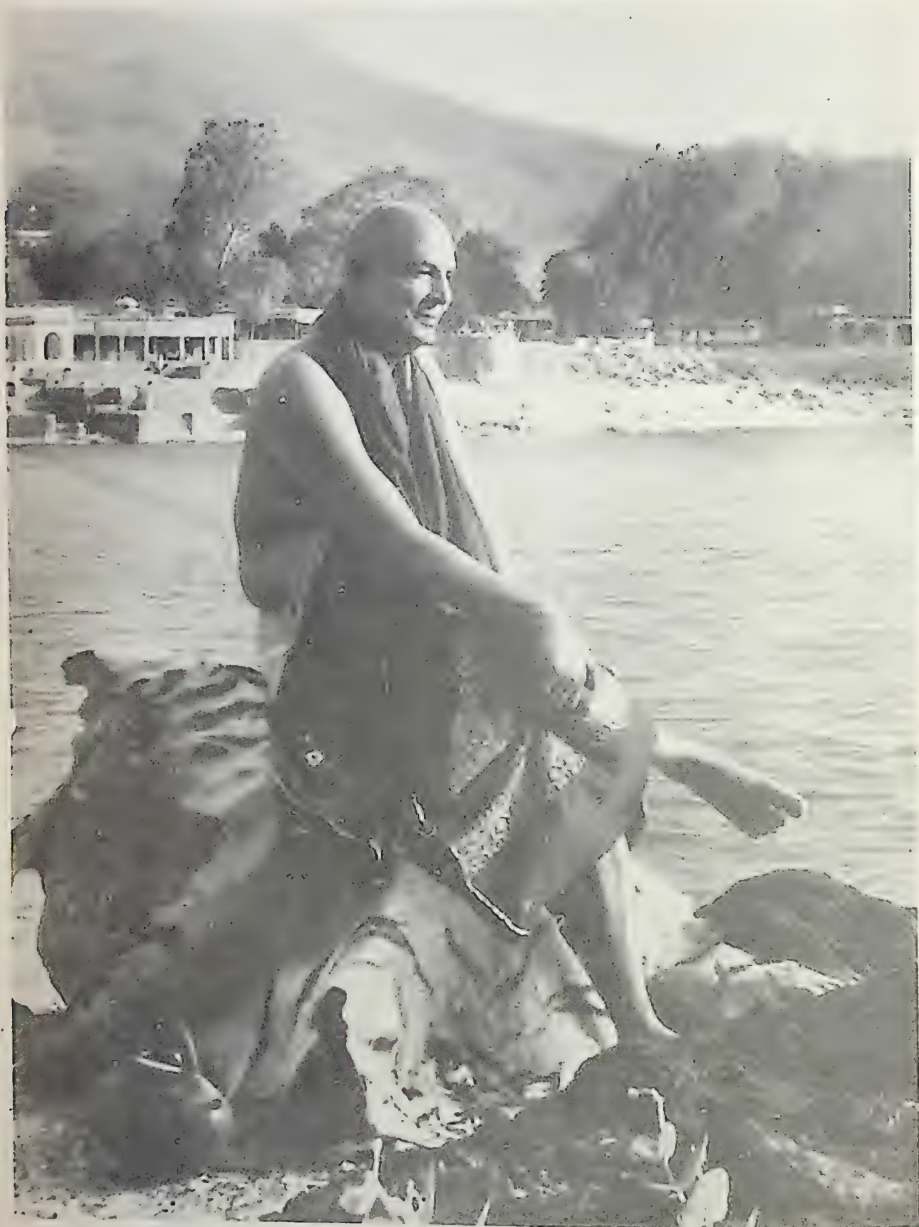


MANTRAS

Guru & Disciple

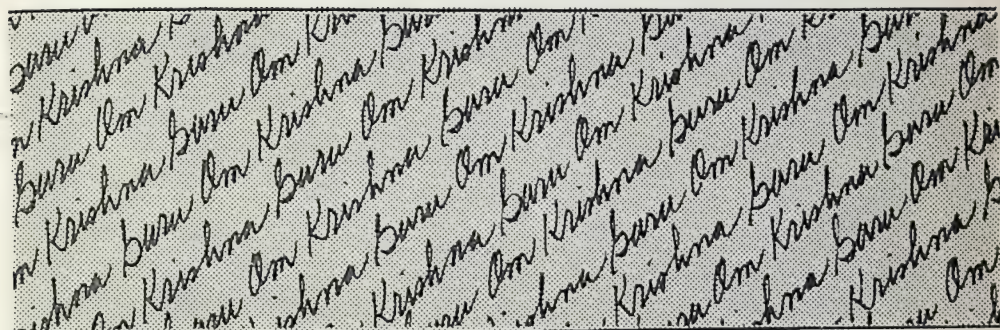
Excerpts from the Writings
of Swami Sivananda Saraswati





Swami Sivananda seated on a tiger skin placed over a rock on the banks of the Ganges. Swami Sivananda later presented the tiger skin as a gift to Swami Radha.

Excerpts from the Writings of Swami Sivananda Saraswati



A Real Guru

Here are the characteristics of a real Guru. . . He has full knowledge of the Self and Vedas. He can remove the doubts of aspirants. He has equal vision and a balanced mind. He is free from. . . egoism, anger, lust, greed, . . . and pride. In his presence one gets Santi and elevation of mind.

India, the sacred land of Adwaita philosophy, the land which produced Sri Sankar, Dattatreya, Vām Dev and others who preached oneness of life and unity of consciousness is full of sectarians now. . . it is difficult to count the number of sects that are prevailing now in India. . . Hopeless discord and disharmony reign everywhere. . . The disciples of one Guru fight with the disciples of another Guru. . .

Lord Chaitanya, Sri Guru Nanak, Swami Dayananda were all catholic, exalted souls. All their teachings were sublime and universal. They never wanted to establish sects or cults of their own. Had they lived now they would have wept at the actions of their followers. . .

A spiritual teacher should never establish a sect of his own. Founding a sect means creation of a fighting center to disturb the peace of the world. . . He can have an institution with broad, universal principles and doctrines that will not conflict with the principles of others and that can be universally accepted and followed by all.

Some. . . made no Ashrams. . . gave no lectures. . . made no disciples, yet their names were handed down. . . as ideal, spiritual personages. They have created such an indelible impression on the minds of people by their exemplary lives. . . The vibrations of a realized soul do purify the whole world even if he remains in a far-off cave in the Himalayas. . .

Can a patient gauge the merits of a doctor as soon as he enters the consultation room? Ignorant disciples who have no experience in the spiritual path at once begin to test and examine their Guru. They make hasty conclusions and inferences from external appearances and ways of living. . . . Even though you live with them. . . you can hardly understand their hearts and depth of knowledge. Jnana and spiritual experiences are internal states.

A young man with a little training. . . poses for a Guru. . . . Ignorant worldly people are deceived. . . . Ladies are very easily duped, easily attracted by sweet music and melody. . . . These Gurus. . . easily influence them. . . make them their tools or instruments. . . exploit them. . . . Open your eyes. . . . Use your reason. . . . Beware of posing Gurus. . . . Some make disciples to get services when they become old.

Devotion to Guru

Guru is Brahman Himself. . . . A word from him is a word from God. Even his presence or company is elevating, inspiring and stirring. . . . Living in his company is spiritual education. . . . He knows the spiritual path. He knows the pitfalls and snares on the way. He gives timely warnings to the students. . . . It is he who overhauls the old, wrong, vicious Samskaras of aspirants, removes the veil of Avidya, all doubts, Moha, fear, etc., awakens the Kundalini and opens the inner eye of intuition.

A thirsty aspirant who has implicit faith in his Guru and who is very eager to imbibe the teachings, can only drink the nectar from him. The student can imbibe from his Guru in proportion to the intensity and degree of his faith in him.

The Guru tests students in various ways. Some students misunderstand him and lose their faith in him. Hence they are not benefitted.

The student and the teacher should live together as father and devoted son, with extreme sincerity and devotion. The aspirant should .

have an eager receptive attitude to imbibe the teachings of the master. Then only will the aspirant be spiritually benefitted.

In the initial stages, an aspirant will have to face many difficulties and doubts on his path. He must have somebody whom he can approach to get his doubts cleared.

You should be careful in selecting the Guru. Do not be carried away by the belief that somebody is a great Mahatma. . . . You should not change your Guru after choosing one. . . . Live with them or move among them for sometime. . . . If he puts forth a contrary view to the one you hold, listen to it by all means, but do not change your central, basic principle. . .

It is only the Guru who will find out your defects. The nature of egoism is such that you will not be able to find out your own defects. . . . In the spiritual path you will have to take out your bones, crush them into powder and extract oil from it and burn the wick with this oil for several years. Only then, will God appear before you. . . . What is the nature of your goal? It is immortality. To attain this should you not strive hard?

Karma Yoga is very necessary for man's evolution. . . . Ethical perfection can only be got by following the instructions of your Guru and by selfless service. . . . Work is worship for a Karma Yogin. . . . This is the way to annihilate your pride and vanity and false notion of superiority.

Energy is indestructible. What I have said will not go in vain. When a sound is uttered, it is not lost. And those who are in tune with my vibrations will be benefitted by my speech.

Guru and Disciple

As man is under the influence of beginningless ignorance, he needs the help of a Preceptor to have Self-realisation. Just as a man cannot see his back, so also he cannot see his own errors.

When you live with your Guru, you must be prepared to do willingly any work assigned by him.

An aspirant who attends on his Guru with great devotion in his personal services, quickly purifies his heart. This is the surest and easiest way for self-purification.

Intense devotion to one's Guru and faithful adherence to his teachings are the most essential qualifications of true discipleship. . . . Gurubhakti draws down the grace of the Preceptor and bestows ultimately illumination and bliss. . . . The grace of the Guru flows towards the disciple if the latter has a true receptive attitude and sincere faith in his Guru.

One's individual ego, preconceived notions, pet ideas and prejudices and selfish interests should be given up. These stand in the way of carrying out the teachings and instructions of one's Guru. . . . Do total self-surrender to obtain the Guru's Grace. . . . Love of Guru should engender love for the whole universe, because you must see him in all.

The spiritual path is not like writing a thesis for an M.A. It is quite a different line. The help of a teacher is necessary at every moment. Young aspirants become self-sufficient, arrogant, and self-assertive these days. They do not care to carry out the orders of a Guru. . . . They want independence from the very beginning. They apply in an absurd manner, with a perverted intellect, the Neti-Neti Doctrine.

If you cannot get an ideal Guru, you can take even a man who has been treading the path of realisation for some years who is straightforward and honest, who is selfless, who is free from pride, egoism, who has good character, who has good knowledge of the Sastras.

Beware of pseudo-gurus. . . will exhibit tricks or feats to attract people. . . . Do not be deceived by their sweet talk.

★ ★ ★

Guru and disciple should be well acquainted with the nature of the other. The student should be able to know thoroughly well the ideas and principles of his Guru and the Guru must be able to detect the mistakes and imperfections in the student. The Guru should be allowed to make a complete study of the aspirant's inner nature. . . . The disciple should lay bare all weakness and shortcomings. . . allow himself to be tested in the crucible of sufferings by his Guru so the Guru may have full confidence in him.

Guru and Initiation

It is better if you get your Mantra from your Guru. This has a tremendous effect on the disciple. The Guru imparts his Shakti

along with the Mantra. If you cannot get a Guru, you can select any Mantra according to your own liking and taste, and repeat it mentally, daily, with Shraddha and Bhava. This also has a great purificatory effect. You will attain the realisation of God.

The method of initiation need not necessarily be the same for every aspirant. According to the yearning of the aspirant the Lord will arrange his guide suited to the temperament of the Sadhak.

Initiation, inspiration and the attainment of knowledge depend upon the aspirant's personal efforts and his earnestness. The Lord's grace descends on him at the proper time, when his patient and sustained struggle for realisation is no longer necessary.

Some like Yogi Milarepa have to serve their masters arduously for a long time whereas some get the initiation in a flash. It depends upon the spiritual Sadhana and evolution of the Sadhak. Yogi Milarepa underwent a series of struggles during his service of his Guru. He had to perform superhuman acts of heroism and bravery before he was initiated. Sages and Rishis of yore put their students to severe trials before they took them into their confidence. They intuitively knew whether a student was fit for initiation. The neophytes were entrusted with the work of tending the cow, bringing fuel from the forest for the Ashram, washing the clothes of the Guru and such other works which look like menial service in the eyes of the present day Sadhaka. For Sadhaks like Swetaketu, Indra, Satyakama and others every act was an act of Yoga or worship of the Guru. To them nothing was menial. They dedicated everything to their masters with unselfish motive. Therefore, they quickly attained Chitta Shuddhi, studied and mastered the Vedas and finally acquired the knowledge of the supreme Self.

Gautama chose four hundred lean weak cows and asked Satyakama Jabala, his disciple, to tend them and instructed him not to return before they became one thousand.

The aspirant, before he desires the grace of the master, should deserve it. The supply of divine grace comes only when there is a real thirst in the aspirant and when he is fit to receive it.

If a Bhakta-saint is approached by an aspirant who wants to tread the path of knowledge, the former may direct the latter to the proper Guru for initiation. . . . But a saint of perfect realisation can give initiation in any path.

It is very difficult to know the particular Yoga by which the Guru

reached perfection unless he himself reveals it to the aspirant out of compassion. No Sadhak will be bold enough to put this question to his Guru lest he should be considered impertinent.

Except in cases of advanced Sadhaks, initiation comes after a long and patient service to the preceptor.

The disciple should come in close contact with the Guru during his service and try to imbibe all his good qualities.

If the fault-finding nature is strong in the disciple, he cannot pick up anything from the preceptor and his spiritual progress will be at a standstill.

In the absence of a realised Sad-Guru, senior aspirants who have trodden the spiritual path for a long time, who are above base desires, who have served their preceptors for a long time, and who are Sannyasins also can help a neophyte. . . . If one is not able to find such an advanced aspirant, one can follow the teachings contained in the books written by realised saints. . . keep a photo of such a realised Guru and worship the same with faith and devotion. Gradually the aspirant will receive inspiration. The Guru may appear in a dream and initiate and inspire him at the proper time.

The disciple becomes like his Guru after some time by following his instructions. . . . A disciple is he who follows the instructions of the Guru to the letter and spirit, who propagates the teachings of the Guru to less evolved souls in the path, till the end of his life.

Are You Really Qualified ?

The spiritual aspirant must have faith and devotion to Guru and the Lord. . . intense aspiration and dispassion. . . lead a contented life, and possess the three fundamental virtues — Ahimsa, Satyam and Brahmacharya. . . be gentle, humble and noble.

The aspirant has to. . . observe moderation in everything and lead a well-regulated, disciplined life of perfect celibacy and self-restraint . . . discipline the senses. . . possess a loving heart. . . never injure the feelings of others. . . not be jealous.

He has no right to compare his privileges with those of others. If a thing is refused to him he should not aspire for it again. Without the spirit of selfless service and self-denial it is very difficult to progress.

The Sadhak must speak gently, sweetly and truthfully... always be cheerful, earnest, vigilant and diligent.

He must possess adaptability, courage, mercy, generosity, tolerance, patience, perseverance and discrimination. He should bear insult and injury, have equanimity, fortitude and forbearance.

His speech must agree with his thought, and his action must agree with his speech.

Even for a single day he should not miss introspection and self-analysis.

He must stick to his ideal and should be ever aware of his goal. Never despair; be hopeful always. Persist in your practice.



Even in the study of secular science and worldly matters you need the help of a teacher. You cannot understand science, mathematics, algebra, geometry without the aid of a teacher. ... Is it not much more necessary, then, to have a Guru in transcendental matters, when the aspirant has to walk along the rugged, thorny spiritual path?

Guru's Grace alone will sustain you in the perilous spiritual path which is as sharp as the edge of a razor.

Even Sri Sankara, Lord Krishna, Lord Rama, Sri Ramanuja, and Ekanath, had their Guru.

The Four Means

Warning:

A student who treads the path of Truth must equip himself with the four means of salvation or Sadhana Chatusthaya viz., Viveka, Vairagya, Shad-Sampat and Mumukshatva.† ... These four means are as old as the Vedas or this world itself. Every religion prescribed these four essential requisites for the aspirant. Names only differ.

Let me sound a note of warning here. ... Vairagya also may come and go if you are careless and mix promiscuously with all sorts of worldly-minded persons. You should develop Vairagya to the maximum degree. The mind is so constituted that it is waiting like a vulture to get back the things once renounced. ... you should take refuge in Viveka and in the impenetrable fortress of wise, dispassionate Mahatmas.

There are different degrees in Vairagya. Supreme dispassion comes when one gets himself established in Brahman. The Vairagya becomes perfectly habitual.

The desire for sensual enjoyment is deep-rooted or ingrained in the minds of all. The Rajasic mind is so framed that it cannot remain even for a single moment without thoughts of enjoyment of some kind or another. People invent various sorts of subtle enjoyments. Modern science has made marvellous contribution towards bringing forth refined ways of enjoyment. Modern civilisation is only another name for sensual enjoyment. . . hotels, cinemas, aeroplanes, radios. . . new dishes, new syrups, new drinks. . . fashion in dress. . . the hair. Even the man who is treading the path of Truth wishes to find lasting and intense sensual enjoyments by means of his Yogic practices. He wants to taste the nectar of immortality. . . hear the music of celestial nymphs. . . These are the subtle temptations. The sincere aspirant will resolutely turn his back from all sorts of refined, subtle, intense forms of enjoyments herein and hereafter.

† *Vireka* — discrimination; *vairagya* — dispassion; *shad-sampat* — six-fold virtue bringing about mental control and discipline; *mumukshatva* — intense desire for liberation.

Greatest Factor in Spiritual Realisation

A true disciple is concerned only with the Divine Nature of the Guru. The Guru's action as man, is not the disciple's concern. . . . Always remember that the nature of a saint is unfathomable. . . . Measure not his divine nature with the inadequate yardstick of your ignorance.



He who initiates Mantra is Diksha-Guru or initiatory Guru.

He who teaches the various forms of Sadhana and Yoga is Shiksha Guru or the teaching Guru.

Of these two, he is the supreme Guru from whom the great Mantra of Ishtadevata has been heard and learnt and by him alone Siddhi can be attained.

Competent disciples are never in want of a competent Guru.

The disciple achieves results in proportion to his faith in his Guru.

The possession of a university degree cannot entitle a man to be an examiner of a Guru.

It is the height of impertinence and foolishness on his part, blinded by the vanity of worldly knowledge, to test the spiritual knowledge of the Guru.

The Guru teaches through personal example. Learn it and act wisely.

The day to day conduct of the Guru is the living ideal to the disciple who is observant.

The true Guru is like a central power-house. He electrifies his disciples.

Mantra-Diksha is indeed a very rare and unique good fortune. Receive it with the utmost reverence and pure spiritual bhav.

A God-realised Sadguru never dies in the ordinary sense. He is ever present, as he has identified himself with the Immortal Cosmic Being. Worship the Guru always. . . . To sincere disciples, he can appear whenever he wills.

The highest form of worship of Guru is meticulous practice of his teachings and living by his example.

The relation between a Guru and disciple is real, sacred and everlasting.

Learn how to obey. Then only you can command.

Learn how to be a disciple. Then only you can become a Guru.

Listen to all but follow one. Respect all, but adore one. Gather knowledge from all, but adopt the teachings of one Master.

Correct understanding, non-attachment to worldly objects, serenity of mind, restraint of the senses, absence of base passions, faith in the Guru and devotion to God are necessary equipment with which the aspirant has to approach the Guru.

Satsang or association with the Guru is an armour and fortress to guard you against all temptations and unfavourable forces of the material world.

The mission of the saints is to save those lost in ignorance of the path leading to God.

The words of a saint go straight to the heart of hearers and cling there.

Saints do the great work of distillation. They raise the souls to purity, perfection, freedom and union with God.

The ink of a sage or Yogi is more precious than the blood of a martyr. A saint or a sage is a Teacher. He is a healer, harbinger of light, love, peace, strength and solace to the weary and heavy laden heart of humanity.

Stories

Our Wedding is Indissoluble!

"Sorrow not, my child. Sit down. In this world of phenomena such things do happen in the natural course of events. It is nobody's fault. When two minds come together, misunderstandings are natural. Sometimes quarrels do arise. Eventually the love of the heart overcomes all and cements the differences."

"It is not always possible for any two persons, however highly evolved they may be, to be always thinking alike and feeling alike. No two minds can ever agree. This is because each one is guided by one's own peculiar desires and cravings, ambitions and aspirations, and in so adjusting our conduct that their fulfilment becomes a joyous sacrifice on our part. If we have the spirit of service the very desires and ambitions in the other person would help us manifest our own spirit in a greater and greater measure."

"Inordinate attachment to things often causes an aggravation of disharmony."

"Such is the relationship between a Guru and his disciple. . . for it is on the plane where everything is Eternal. You and I have been together not only in this incarnation, but in so many of our past lives. Our relationship is irrevocable."

A Self-Sacrificing Disciple

Sri Gopala received his initiation from his Guru, Swami Santananda, in Benares. The Guru said: "Look here, my dear Gopala; you will attain Moksha by recitation of this Mantra. But do not reveal this Mantra to anybody. If you reveal it, you will go to hell."

Sri Gopala was an aspirant of a very large heart. He at once went to the market and recited the Mantra openly before a large assembly

of persons. He spoke plainly: "You all can attain salvation through the recitation of this Mantra. It was given to me by my Brahma Nishta Guru. My guru told me that I would go to hell if I reveal it to other people. I am prepared to go to hell. But I am exceedingly glad to see that you all will attain Salvation."

Swami Santananda was passing along the market road. He heard the candid speech of his large-hearted, sympathetic disciple Sri Gopala. He was highly pleased with his sincere disciple and said: "My dear Gopala, you will also attain Moksha this very second. You are a noble, magnanimous soul. I want disciples of your description." Aspirants should develop Udaratta to a considerable extent. This will induce oneness, unity and cosmic love. It will generate Adwaitic feeling. It paves a long way to the attainment of Moksha.

The Technique of Perfection

Seekers of Truth!

The desire to seek help, to search for light, to look up to higher powers, is inborn in all beings. The incapacity to achieve the ideal of the aspirations that spring from the heart, the anguish which accompanies such incapacity, and the knowledge of the existence of superior powers, obliges individuals to take shelter under those that are endowed with the ability to lift them up to higher levels. The world is a dramatic scene of dependence of beings on others that can fill up what they lack. Love for God means the yearning to reach the highest, to become perfect, and this is not easy for all who wish to be so.

Perfection has its center in the core of the seeker himself and hence the difficulty of knowing the exact technique of realising it, which is God, Self, and all that is best. The key to the door that opens into the realm of truth and perfection does not lie in those who see through the intellect, but those who intuit the reality in integral comprehension, not as an object lying outside, but as rooted in the very meaning of the subject. These are called the seers or the sages, the Brahmanishtas who can communicate the spiritual consciousness even through a glance or a touch or through a single command. They are the Gurus or the Masters who teach the truth to and shower God-consciousness on the mortals. Patanjali Maharishi says that Ishwara himself is the greatest Guru, for he is the most ancient and is omnipresent and, being the seed of omniscience, he is the teacher of all

teachers, unsullied by the changes of time. To surrender oneself to God is, therefore, to seek shelter under the origin of knowledge, the source of power, the Lord of creation itself.

Guru is not the human personality. Guru is the Divine Being, the immortal essence that shines through the human person. The perishable body constituted by the physical elements should not be mistaken for the Guru. The real teacher is the one Brahman that manifests itself as and when it likes. Man can learn only from a human and hence God teaches man through a human body. The human body of the Guru is an occasion to worship his universal nature of supreme Light, a nail to hang the shirt on. The human side of the Guru is not what is important, it is the unseen but the only real Atman, the ubiquitous principle that underlies it, that is the true Guru. When we pray to God, we pray not to a body. When one resorts to a Guru, he does not do so to a material form. The dignified substratum of life, light and joy, the grand consciousness that soars above the paltry grandeur of the universe, that is what is to be seen in a Guru! "Hit it, O Somya," says the Upanishad. That is the target of meditation and the object of devotion, the teacher and the saviour, the support and the goal. Lord Krishna says, "Know me 'in truth'," where he emphasizes the fact that his form, the body, is not to be mistaken for the Eternal. Guru is God and God is Guru, and the Svetaswatara Upanishad says that the truth is revealed to that great-souled one who does not consider God and Guru as two different beings.

The sacred relation of Guru and disciple is a very ancient one. Even from Vedic times we hear of the necessity of the aspirants seeking Brahma-Srotriyas and Brahmanishtas being stressed. "Examining the worthless nature of the action-bound world the wise one should get disgusted with it, for the eternal cannot be reached through action. For the sake of knowing That he should resort to a Guru, well versed in spiritual lore and also established in Brahman-consciousness," says the Mundaka Upanishad. Though the Guru does not actually give anything not already possessed, he becomes the means which digs out the spiritual wealth that is buried under the ignorant mind of the aspirant. Since all experiences in the world are the effects of the interaction of the knower and the known, the spiritual experience too is in a different way the effect, as it were, of the union of subjective endeavour and the object presented before it, be it physical or purely psychical, be it embodied teachers or bodiless mental forms or ideas.

It is from the Guru that the seeker gets the influx of spirituality

and divine Bhava. What the aspirant receives, he intensifies and multiplies a thousand-fold through earnest Sadhana. This is the duty of all aspirants. The Guru is the gateway to the transcendental Truth-consciousness, but it is the aspirant that has to enter through it. The Guru is a help but the actual task of practical Sadhana falls on the aspirant himself.

In truth the Guru dwells in your heart. The Guru is ever by your side. You have only to think of him with real Bhava and you will at once feel his spiritual presence without fail. In proportion to the effacement of the lower ego does the Guru manifest in you and appear before you. Therefore be ever ready to receive him and empty yourself of all contents so that he may fill himself in you.

Talks with the Aspirants

Is a Guru Necessary?

A Guru is absolutely necessary for everyone. In the initial stages an aspirant will have to face many difficulties and doubts in his path. He must have somebody whom he can approach to get his doubts cleared. Even ordinary secular sciences have to be learnt from a teacher. To learn the Science of science, Brahma Vidya or Self-knowledge, the help of a Guru is absolutely essential. It is only the Guru who will find out your defects. The nature of egoism is such that you will not be able to find out your own defects. In the case of a very few exalted souls, their own Self serves as their Guru and guides them from within; but this is due to the fact that they have in their previous births performed intense Sadhana with the help and guidance of Brahma Vidya preceptors.



Only the man who has already been to Badrinath will be able to tell you the road. In the case of the spiritual path it is still more difficult to find your way! The mind will mislead you very often. The Guru will be able to remove pitfalls and obstacles and lead you along the right path. He will tell you: "This road leads you to Moksha; this one leads to bondage."

Some might find their own inner conscience is their Guru. It will guide them aright. They, too, have ascended the steps of the ladder of

yoga through service of the Guru and through his instructions in their previous births. Their heart is so pure that doubts do not arise at all in them. They are, so to say, born Siddhas.

★ ★ ★

“Whom shall I choose as my Guru?”

He who is able to clear your doubts, he who is sympathetic in your Sadhana, he who does not disturb your beliefs but helps you on from where you are, he in whose very presence you feel spiritually elevated — he is your Guru. Once you choose your Guru, implicitly follow him. God will guide you through the Guru.

★ ★ ★

It is the duty of saints and elder Sannyasins to protect spiritually thirsting aspirants.

The aspirants of today need not renounce the world and run to the forest in search of a Guru. Some will, no doubt, do so; and they will eventually act as the spiritual guides to the rest of humanity. The vast majority would, however, have to learn at home and practise Yoga in their daily life, to learn and apply the technique of transforming their daily actions into Yoga Sadhana.

... The teacher and the seeker should meet half-way. This divine meeting place is a spiritual institution, Ashram or Math.

The worship and adoration of the Guru is the first step to Cosmic Consciousness.

The vision of the Guru will slowly expand. You will, under the wise guidance of the illuminated Guru, gradually perceive that Supreme Principle that resided in your Guru pervades the entire creation. When the inner consciousness expands, there will be nothing to obstruct it, no ego to limit its expansion. You will very soon realise Cosmic Consciousness. This is the Supreme secret of service of Guru, worship of Guru and self-surrender to Guru. First realise your God in your Guru. Then you will realise God in everyone. First serve your Guru selflessly. Then you will be able to serve the entire humanity selflessly. First worship your Guru with sincerity and devotion. Then you will worship the All-pervading Lord. Guru is the gateway to God-realisation.

Guru is the sacred altar at which you can willingly and lovingly sacrifice your ego.

★ ★ ★

It is the Guru who removes the veil of ignorance. Serve him with Bhakti. Then you will get his Grace. The physical form of the Guru will slowly vanish. You will realise the Atma in and through him. You will see your Guru in all forms, animate and inanimate.

★ ★ ★

Do not use your reason too much in the selection of your Guru. You will fail if you do so. If you fail to get a first-class Guru, try to follow the instructions of the Sadhu who is treading the path for some years, who has purity and other virtuous qualities and who has some knowledge of the scriptures. Just as a student of an intermediate class will be able to teach a student of the Third Form when a Professor with M.A. qualifications is not available. . . this second-class type of Guru will be able to help you.

★ ★ ★

The greatest service that I can do to humanity is training and moulding of aspirants. Every Yoga student, when he is purified and elevated, becomes a centre of spirituality. He will draw to himself through his magnetic aura thousands of baby-souls in spirituality for transformation and regeneration.

If you think that I am worthy enough, you can take me as your Guru.

★ ★ ★

Realised souls are not rare. Ordinary ignorant-minded persons cannot easily recognise them. Only a few persons who are pure and embody all virtuous qualities can understand realised souls and they only will be benefitted in their company.

Testing a guru is highly difficult. Do not use your intellect here. Have faith. The real aspirant is quite free from such questions and doubts. You will be miraculously helped if you believe in my words.

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Testing a guru is highly difficult. Do not use your intellect here. Have faith. The real aspirant is quite free from such questions and doubts. You will be miraculously helped if you believe in my words.

I am neither a Guru nor a Sat-Guru. I take great delight in serving others.

★ ★ ★

Fail not to observe the vow of celibacy at any cost.

★ ★ ★

Every Sannyasi, every Yogic student has some defect or other. It is only a full-blown Yogi or a Jnani who will be absolutely free from evil qualities and defects. . . are rare. . . Slight friction is bound to come between friends, at times between Sannyasins too. One must excuse the other, must reunite and forget the past. You must have a tendency to grasp only the good in others. . . Everyone has some virtues. No one is entirely bad. Remember the point well. After some time you will find good only in others. . .

★ ★ ★

If you cannot get a suitable Guru, you can select any Mantra according to your inclination and repeat the same with great faith in the power of the Mantra. Any Mantra is powerful. Stick to one and to one form. Do not change. . . Aspirants who have no faith in the Mantra, after some practice, jump to another. To avoid this, it is advised to get a Mantra from a Guru. Further the Guru imparts his special power to the disciple through the Mantra at the time of Diksha.

. . . I continuously work, read and write. I never go to hill-stations or sea-side for a holiday, change of work gives rest. Meditation gives abundant rest.

★ ★ ★

. . . I am a strange mixture of service, devotion, Yoga and wisdom. I am a follower of Sri Sankara. I am a Keval-Adwaita Vedantin. I am not at all a dry lip-Vedantin. I am a practical Vedantin.

I practise and advocate the Yoga of Synthesis. I practise Ahimsa, Satyam and Brahmacharya.

★ ★ ★

Renunciation of egoism alone constitutes the renunciation of all. Doership or enjoyership arises through the idea of 'I'.



The word Guru contains two letters — *Gu* and *Ru*. *Gu* means darkness and *Ru* means the dispeller. Being the dispeller of the darkness of ignorance, the teacher is called Guru.

Guru and Diksha (Initiation)

Yoga should be learnt from a Guru. It is he who will recognise the class to which the aspirant belongs and prescribe suitable Sadhana. The reason for the early downfall of the majority of aspirants is that they imagine themselves to be qualified to adopt the highest form of Yoga at the beginning. The qualified aspirant will be humble enough to approach a Guru, surrender himself to the Guru and serve and learn from him.

Diksha is the giving of the Mantra by the Guru. Initiation gives spiritual knowledge and destroys sin. As one lamp is lit at the flame of another, so the divine Sakti within Mantra is communicated from Guru to the disciple.

Initiation tears the veil of mystery and enables the disciple to grasp the hidden truth behind scriptural texts. The Guru only, by Diksha, will give the right perspective in which to study the scriptures. He will flash his torch of Self-realisation on the truth within them.

Siddhi

Siddhi is perfection. A Siddha is one who has attained perfection or Self-realisation through Sadhana. Literally Siddhi means success, achievement, attainment and fruition of all kinds.

One may attain Siddhi in speech, Mantra, Yoga, etc. The greatest of all Siddhis is liberation or Moksha, freedom from the cycle of births and deaths and union with Para Brahma or the Supreme Being.

The aspirant should not pursue siddhis, as he may misuse the powers. He should ignore them as they are obstacles in the spiritual path.

I Am Pain: Thy Teacher

I

O Man! You curse me, blame me,
You hate me and frown on me.
You think I am cruel and heartless;
You try to slay me with anaesthetics,
With Chloroform and Bromides;
You attack me with anodynes,
Sedatives and opiates;
You phone to the doctors
And run to the hospitals,
You fly to the Vienna and hill stations,
You wire to your friends and relations;
You approach the saints of Himalayas
For Buties or herbs;
You do Mrityunjaya Japa and Havan,
You burn incense and pray —
To kill the Teacher
Who warns you,
Who comes to help and bless you!

II

I am not your enemy —
I am your sincere friend!
I am a messenger from God,
I am an Angel from heaven —
To teach you wisdom,
To instill in your heart
Mercy and dispassion,
To turn your mind towards God,
To destroy your intense clinging
To things mundane —
That are perishable and illusory.
I am your guide and silent Teacher!
I am pain, the best thing in this world!
I am an eye-opener, soul-awakener,
I am an inspirer and thriller;
I came to remind you of God,
To point to you the Divine Path,
To make you desist from evil ways,
To make you practise virtues, good habits.
You have really misunderstood me.
I am a mental Vritti in the mind-lake,
I am only absence of pleasure,
I co-exist with pleasure —
I am the other side of the coin of pleasure-pain.
I am the cause of the starting of philosophy,
I am the cause for man's Purushartha —
I am the cause for man's aspiration:
I set the mind of philosophers to think,
I make the Yogis to start Sadhana,
I make the sages to practise meditation,
I make a worldly man a Super man.

III

You failed to observe the laws of health —
The rules of hygiene and right-living,
You took Rajasic and Tamasic foods,
You were not regular in doing exercise,
You did not practise Pranayama and Asanas,
You did not pray and meditate;
You were immoderate in your food —
You did not take a balanced diet,
You did not bask in the sun,
You slept in ill-ventilated rooms.
You took too much of sweetmeats,
You drank impure water,
You hated and injured your neighbours,
You were lustful, malicious and greedy,
You took meat, fish and eggs
And developed gout, rheumatism and albuminaria;
You married a third wife,
You were a heavy smoker in the club,
You drank liquors in the hotels;
You took bribes and cheated in business;
You twisted the truth in the courts,
And by clever advocacy
Sent innocent men
To the prison and the gallows
You injected water into the veins
And charged heavily for injections: —
And so, I come to you
To heal, teach and guide!

IV

Understand now at least
My secret and good nature,
My interest in your well-being.
Lead a virtuous life,
Practise simple living and high thinking,
Lead a natural life,
Observe the laws of health and hygiene —
Eat simple food, a well-balanced diet,
Take only vegetarian diet;
Practise Ahmimsa, Satyam, Brahmacharya,
Lead the Life Divine,
Remain as a Brahmacharin,
Or better still, take to Sannyasa
After equipping yourself with 'four'.
Attend the Sadhana Weeks,
Practise Sadhana in Ananda Kutir,
And the Training Courses,
Go through the "Divine Life" magazine,
Study "Spiritual lessons," "Aphorisms,"
"The Necessity for Sannyasa"
And practise the precepts contained therein;
Remember Lord Viswanath always,
Take bath in the Ganges and purify.
Then I will depart and leave you,
I will not trouble you any longer.
Love me, believe me, heed my message
I will give you peace, bliss, immortality,
I will surely bless you:
This is my definite promise, friend!
Good bye, comrade! Be cheerful!

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MANTRAS

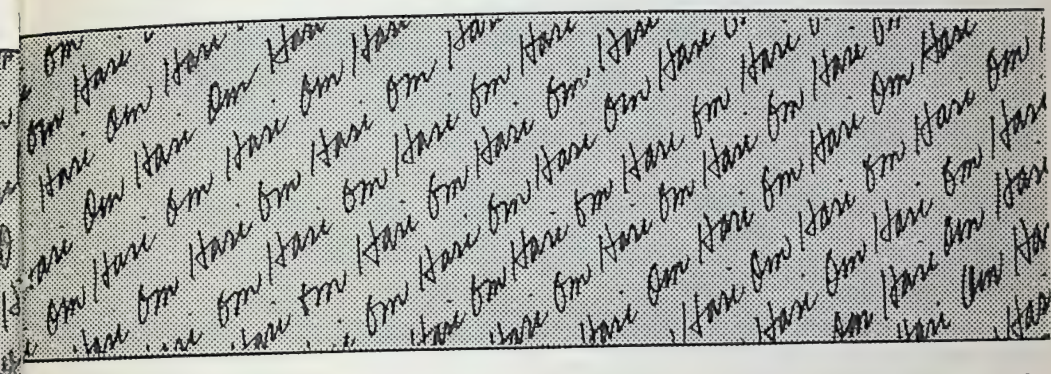
Questions and Answers



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Questions and Answers

Interview with Swami Radha



Q. Swami Radha, let us begin at the beginning; what is a Mantra?

A. A Mantra can be many things, but at the start it is enough to say that my own Guru, Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh, defines the Mantra as a "sacred syllable or word or set of words through the repetition and reflection of which one attains perfection or realization of the Self."

Q. Is a Mantra, then, always associated with the Divine, with the name of a Deity?

A. Not always, or not directly. The three Mantras that we often chant at the Ashram, "Om Krishna Guru," "Hari Om," and "Om Namah Sivaya," are associated directly with the Deity, the first two with Krishna and the last with Siva. But "Om" can also be chanted alone; it is indeed a Mantra and many volumes have been written on its meaning.

Q. I know that to be effective the Mantra must be repeated many times; can you tell us how many?

A. There really is no limit; I myself have chanted five hours a day for two years. Later I continued to chant for only two hours, because by that time I had built up what is called "Mantric Power," which is necessary before one can give another person a Mantra initiation. Why would I have to chant for five hours at a time? Because it takes that long for the mind to become single-pointed. There have been some spiritual giants in India who have chanted ten hours a day for many years. Obviously, the more you put into it, the more you will achieve.

Q. This seems extraordinary to the Western mind. What can one really achieve through chanting? What good is it likely to do me to repeat the same thing over and over?

A. Yes, I can understand that it may not seem rational, but I know from my own experience that there are certain immediate results. First, the ability to concentrate is much increased; then control of breath and emotions is gradually achieved. After this first stage of development, when emotions have been refined into true feelings, the influence of the power of the Mantra becomes very subtle. The image of the Deity, with which you start, will disappear as perceptions attain greater clarity and a state of purity unknown as long as they were overruled by the senses. The most important goal in chanting is the attainment of perfection, the realization of the Self.

Q. Before we get into that, perhaps you might wish to tell us of your own experience. Did you know anything of Mantras before you went to India to meet Swami Sivananda?

A. Not at all. As a child I had many out-of-the-ordinary experiences and perceptions and, although I did not think of it that way, I used to sit in meditation — deep, deep in thought looking at one spot. My mother tried to discourage these strange ways and interest me in doing the things young girls usually do. I never read any books on the subject of meditation, Mantra or Yoga while I was in Germany and do not know if any were available. When I came to Canada I was so busy trying to learn English for my job that I had no time to read.

When I came to India I heard about Mantras and the marvelous power they have. But I was Western and very skeptical, and remarked to my Guru, "I cannot question it because I do not know enough, my

questions would only be on the level of assumption." I realized that the only thing for me to do was to practice chanting the Mantra so I would have something substantial to ask about. As a result, through my practice of Mantra and keeping notes — I would record most of the times when I reached "impasses" as I called them, times when I just did not know why I was doing this practice — I recognized the rebellion of my mind. It complained of carrying on something that seemed useless. But I continued — five hours a day, seven days a week, for seven weeks.

Swami Sivananda told me that I should intersperse the chanting with worship. When I said that I came from a Protestant religion and had no interest in ritual, he suggested something very simple and very beautiful, that I grow white flowers and place them on some form of altar when I chanted to Lord Siva. He said that I should always designate the same spot in my house as a holy place, and when I placed white flowers there, by the law of thought association, they would put me in touch with the spirit that is expressed in the symbol of Lord Siva. Then I was to grow blue flowers to associate with Lord Krishna, and roses or any colourful flower for Divine Mother.

By this time Sivananda had explained the male-female duality in the pantheon of the gods and goddesses of the Indian religions. To help me understand, he compared this to the family unit in the villages where one always know the mother of a child, but not always the father. One can always recognize the power manifest — the female aspect, Divine Mother, or Sakti — but one cannot always recognize power unmanifest, the symbol of the male, Lord Siva. I reflected on this, "Yes, I can incorporate that into my thinking. When I grow white flowers for Siva I will remember that white has no colours, or has all colours, and Siva is energy, power. It is hard to think of energy, but the very fact that I know that it is energy will help me. Sivananda is not asking me to worship an image of Siva." I had the insight that the meditation on Lord Siva did not need to end with His image, that the image just became a focal point for my mind until I understood on a deeper level, intuitively, the principle of energy as such.

I did not feel strong in my spiritual practice, my meditation; my concentration was on a teeter-totter. An image helped me to focus on something that was a little strange; although it was a human figure I could not mistake it for any person I knew. In particular, the symbolic meaning of the bent position of Lord Krishna was helpful — "I am lenient with you, I am aware of your human failings. You keep forgetting your Divine nature on account of the body, but I will remind you."

I thought in the same way about Divine Mother, and then I began to understand that a religion that has both the male and female aspects is bound to survive. I could see why the Buddhists had the Mother of Mercy, and why the Catholics had placed so much emphasis on Mary.

It was not easy, but I learned many things. As I had not had time to read books, what I did learn came to me from my own experience. I became aware of the impasses of the mind, the obstacles that the mind creates. I became aware of habit; habit had suggested to me that I would not be able to accomplish this chanting, that I would reach an impasse. If I had not made this suggestion to myself, or had not accepted the disparaging remark of someone I looked to as an authority, I might have had less difficulty.

I also had the problem of being sure that I had completed an accurate number when I chanted my Mantra. So I took a box of matches, I had my mala with 108 beads, and every time I finished one mala I would throw one match on the floor. When I had finished 10 malas I thought, "Well, I have done 80 extra Mantras. What shall I do with them?" I decided to make it 1100, simply to overcome the resistance of my mind. Slowly I got hold of myself. The side effects of this were remarkable.

My very depressive moods, seeing no purpose in life, all lifted. I had been given every material thing I wished for but did not find it worth living for that. Nor did I find it worthwhile to live for a marriage, when I saw all the problems of married life. But I felt there must be happiness somewhere and I wondered — there were so many stories that we have descended from heaven — is it possible for anyone to think of anything that has not existed at some time in the past or might exist at some time in the future? The story of Icarus in Greek mythology came to my mind, the man who wished to fly. I thought that this may have been the beginning of the airplane. Maybe these things have to be imagined and desired in the mind to bring about the manifestation. The same principle Sivananda had told me about — power unmanifest. What can I manifest? What will sound manifest? Do sounds manifest at all?

I was probably very hard on myself. I would sometimes get up and walk around the Prayer Room to stop myself from falling asleep, until I had finished my practice. I had not known about such a spiritual practice until I went to China. The monks there often walk for as much

as 16 hours, but I was only walking to keep myself awake until I had finished my Mantras.

I became aware of numerous things; that when someone pronounces my name, from the resonance of the voice I know if that person is friendly, if that person likes me, or is only socially polite, cool, reserved and distant. So many people are unaware of the messages they give, even in a simple word, how they give themselves away. So I began to understand that there was something in the practice of chanting Mantras, after all.

Then some very beautiful things happened. I saw clouds of colours — lovely shades of blue. I thought of what blue meant — the blue Monday when people are depressed and not very active; the beautiful blue of the sky that makes everyone happy. Lord Krishna is presented as blue, and this shade of blue has become anchored in my mind as Krishna blue. The fleeting thought came to my mind that I must study symbology. I noticed that after I had seen these beautiful shades of blue when chanting I was elated for a long time.

After some time I became aware that I was becoming indulgent, and I said, "Oh, my God, I am looking forward to something like spiritual movies. When will I ever stop looking for entertainment, comfort?" That is disastrous. Then one day I had an experience in which I maintained awareness. The sounds became like huge soap bubbles and they were spinning around; they had a kind of colour and yet they didn't. Suddenly the desire surged up in me, "I wish I could sit on one and travel into space." At that very moment I saw myself move into space. That experience was a discovery for me that there is more than one way of leaving the body. I never had the connection of a silver cord or anything like that, as I had heard of in others' experiences; there was nothing tugging at me. And I began to wonder if my experiences were genuine, but then I stopped making comparisons, remembering again my Guru saying, "Competition is not desirable, although it is tolerated in business; but it should not exist on the Spiritual Path."

These experiences became a tremendous foundation and source of strength to help me to carry on when my mind became restless, when it tried to revolt against this new discipline. My Guru, my great Guru, was a wonderful inspiration. I wanted to make real changes in myself and any pain and any effort were worth it.

I thought in the same way about Divine Mother, and then I began to understand that a religion that has both the male and female aspects is bound to survive. I could see why the Buddhists had the Mother of Mercy, and why the Catholics had placed so much emphasis on Mary.

It was not easy, but I learned many things. As I had not had time to read books, what I did learn came to me from my own experience. I became aware of the impasses of the mind, the obstacles that the mind creates. I became aware of habit; habit had suggested to me that I would not be able to accomplish this chanting, that I would reach an impasse. If I had not made this suggestion to myself, or had not accepted the disparaging remark of someone I looked to as an authority, I might have had less difficulty.

I also had the problem of being sure that I had completed an accurate number when I chanted my Mantra. So I took a box of matches, I had my mala with 108 beads, and every time I finished one mala I would throw one match on the floor. When I had finished 10 malas I thought, "Well, I have done 80 extra Mantras. What shall I do with them?" I decided to make it 1100, simply to overcome the resistance of my mind. Slowly I got hold of myself. The side effects of this were remarkable.

My very depressive moods, seeing no purpose in life, all lifted. I had been given every material thing I wished for but did not find it worth living for that. Nor did I find it worthwhile to live for a marriage, when I saw all the problems of married life. But I felt there must be happiness somewhere and I wondered — there were so many stories that we have descended from heaven — is it possible for anyone to think of anything that has not existed at some time in the past or might exist at some time in the future? The story of Icarus in Greek mythology came to my mind, the man who wished to fly. I thought that this may have been the beginning of the airplane. Maybe these things have to be imagined and desired in the mind to bring about the manifestation. The same principle Sivananda had told me about — power unmanifest. What can I manifest? What will sound manifest? Do sounds manifest at all?

I was probably very hard on myself. I would sometimes get up and walk around the Prayer Room to stop myself from falling asleep, until I had finished my practice. I had not known about such a spiritual practice until I went to China. The monks there often walk for as much

as 16 hours, but I was only walking to keep myself awake until I had finished my Mantras.

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Q. It is very good to have this information of how you felt personally in your early days of chanting Mantras. Perhaps now we can discuss in more detail some of the reasons for undertaking this practice.

A. Well, then, let me first say a few words about developing the quality of single-pointedness, and about overcoming self-will. In the beginning, while I was chanting, I would be sitting there asking myself, "Am I an idiot? What am I doing here? What is going to come of all this? I could be doing so many other things, and being of help to so many people, instead of just sitting here all this time chanting." These are typical thoughts, typical complaints, and what you are going through is a tug-of-war with your mind which wants to force your Higher Self out of control. When I say "mind" or "ego" I do not necessarily mean pride and vanity; I mean rather, a body-mind which has been the ruler, and when we encourage our Higher Self to exert mastery over us through the practice of Mantra Yoga, we suddenly become aware of all the personality aspects which have ruled our lives. These personality aspects, when threatened, put up a fight; they do not want to lose their hold on us.

The ego or personality aspects of the intellectual will put up a greater fight than those of the rather naive person. The latter is more able to say, "Yes, I see where I was wrong; I won't do that again," while the intellectual is still stubbing his toes, thinking up rational explanations to justify mistakes.

This is one of the dangers facing the follower of Jnana Yoga, the yoga of the mind; he will look down on the practitioner of Bhakti Yoga, the yoga of love and devotion. This only indicates that he has not used his mind to develop true discrimination. Many swamis and yogis in India told me that they hoped that in their next lives they would be reincarnated as women because women have true devotion, true humility, and this is the path to liberation.

You see, to overcome the ego we must practice surrender. We must be able to surrender to the Mantra itself and to the energy of the Mantra, and this requires purification. If we cannot surrender, that energy will feed the ego and we will become real ego-maniacs. That is why many disciples prostrate themselves at the feet of their Guru; it is an aid in developing humility. The disciple will, in fact, be prostrating himself to the Divine Spirit that is in the Guru, and in all of us.

Another important aspect of chanting is that it will help us to understand and control our emotions. And this will come about as you become more aware of your own voice. At the beginning, in order to

help develop single-pointedness, when you notice that your mind is just not able to be still, you allow it to be active, but you keep it within the framework of your activity by going into all the small details. Think, "How does my voice produce a sound? What is necessary for it to do so? How do I create a higher sound?" and so on. Even an exercise such as this to maintain single-pointedness can lead to many insights.

You will find in the course of time that you can sing as you have never done before and that your range has expanded; you can sing both higher notes and those that are lower. You will notice that when the breath flows evenly, the voice is smooth. You will hear the expression of anger or disappointment in your voice, as well as all other emotions. But you must learn when to stop, when to think, "All right, that is enough now; I do not need to continue or I will be indulging myself." When you find that your emotions are extremely difficult to control, then you address the Divine Energy at a very personal level, saying, "YOU! I'm not responsible for all of this. Why did You give me all these emotions? Why did you not give me the strength and insight to handle them? I want You to come here now and do something about it; open the door or pull the curtain back so that I can see why I feel this way." You may not consider that to speak like this to the Divine is a form of prayer, but it is. It is all right for you to address the Divine Energy at a very personal level, even though you understand intellectually that when you say "Lord" or "You" there is no other being, but the intelligence that created you as a personal unit is both personal and impersonal. To recognize the need for help and to be willing to ask God for that help, this is humility.

It is interesting and a little sad that most people can only be single-pointed when they are in distress; when they are joyful they will be single-pointed for an instant, but then they begin to scheme to keep that joyful mood, and of course the scheming destroys it. But when you are chanting in the single-pointedness of your despair, then you let go and you give it all back. You can say, "Well, I'm sorry, but I have to admit that I am like a baby that can't even walk. You must come and pick me up. You have to wait until I can walk. And if You want me to walk, if You don't want me to always be a spiritual baby, then You must come now and help me." There comes a time when each seeker must take off the spiritual baby shoes, but for a while do not be too proud to be God's little child.

Q. Could you tell us now how Mantras were created and something about the history of this practice?

A. The goal of all yogas is revelation, union with the Divine. Different paths of yoga have been followed in different ages, or "yugas" as they are sometimes referred to. In each yuga the goal of yoga is fulfilled in the best possible way suitable to the individual in that particular age. In the Satya Yuga, for example (satya means purity), it was not necessary for the aspirants to do very much Hatha Yoga, or Bhakti or Jnana Yoga, the emphasis was on meditation. In the Treta Yuga sacrifices were recommended. These did not need to be the sacrifice of life; it might be the sacrifice of the desires for life, desires that are not really deep and that would have meant fulfillment on a particular level of life. In the Dvapara Yuga all forms of worship were encouraged, prayers, conversations with God, worship in the highest form.

Each yuga had certain yogis, teachers, saints to show the Path, holy people who have understood the emphasis of their particular time. We are now supposed to live in the Kali Yuga, the Iron Age, the last of the four yugas, the evil age. Evil forces and immorality are supposed to prevail, and it would certainly seem to be so. At this time, the chanting of the Lord's Name, and the Mantra or Mantra Yoga is supposed to be the best development for the individual. There is a saying, "Kali Yuga Keval Namah Adhara" — in the Kali Yuga the Holy Name is the boat to cross the ocean of Maya, illusion. The Name of God is the weapon with which to conquer the mind.

Tradition says that the Mantras were given to us by the Rishis, the great seers, holy ones and teachers who lived in times past. They, in turn, are said to have picked up the Mantras, or tuned into them, on the etheric level. The Mantras were created from the subtle vibrations of many millions of people who have cried out in their distress across the centuries. They are, so to speak, the essence of all those cries, but the Mantras are more than that; they are the answers to those cries.

Q. You have described some of the benefits of chanting a Mantra and told of the possible origin of the Mantra. Does the Mantra have any power of its own, or is all the benefit to be gained just from the repetition?

A. That is a very good point to bring up, though here again, the Western mind may find it a little difficult to accept this concept. Consciousness may be perceived as energy. Subconscious, superconscious, all is

energy, a vortex of energy, and it can be compared to the funnel you might see in a tornado. Actually, the funnel does not exist; it is the air current picking up the dust and forming a funnel. When the tornado is gone, the energy goes somewhere else and manifests in the same or a different way. Compare consciousness to that energy — consciousness is indestructible.

To give another example which may lead to the understanding of the power of the Mantra, I read sometime ago of a very curious incident in England, when the call letters of a television station in the United States were picked up on the receiver of a television studio. What was really curious was not that the call letters had travelled such a long distance, but that that particular test pattern had not been used for several years. So the energy that had been manifested in those call letters had drifted about in space for five years at the rate of 186,000 miles per second and then apparently by chance, had come back to the planet earth.

Now, if you think of all the people in India over the years who have chanted the name of Krishna or Siva, or all the Christians over the centuries who have repeated or chanted the name of Jesus, you can see that this constant repetition would create a tremendous reserve of power and that the truly devout person who chants the name of a particular aspect of the Divine will eventually tap into that power.

It is important to understand the meaning of the Devata, the presiding deity of the Mantra, the informing power, the personified aspect of God. If you think of a diamond as representing Cosmic Intelligence, where the Light falls on the diamond that which is reflected becomes visible. A diamond that has many facets will reflect many rays of Light at the same time. But one particular ray will appeal especially to you as you begin your way on the Spiritual Path. The full power of God or the Divine Energy is just too much for the human mind to grasp and so it needs to have the link established in a personal aspect such as Krishna or Siva in the Indian religions, or Jesus or Mary in Christianity. Adults who are still spiritual children need to have a personal concept of God until they can see the Divine Energy in its pure form.

But there is still more that can be said about the power of the Mantra. There is, for example, the Kilaka, the very fine thread that links the disciple to the Mantra, to the power of the Mantra, to the Guru, and to the Deity — and also to all who have ever chanted the Mantra, or are chanting that Mantra at that time throughout the world.

Q. Could you give an example?

A. I will tell you of a very beautiful experience that came to me when I first started the Ashram in Burnaby, in Vancouver. There was so much work to be done and the young fellows who were at the Ashram at that time did not always sympathize with my desire to be alone for spiritual practice, or my wish to do spiritual practice rather than be always helping with the painting or the carpentry. So one day I was in the garden with my mala and my box of matches, and I was aware of all the opposition and I thought, "Perhaps this is not the right time for me to do it; I should perhaps wait until I am older and there are more young people here to do my work." So I opened my eyes. My mala was on the ground and there were some matches around which I gathered together.

When I looked up I was amazed to see that there was a whole circle of people sitting around. They were all reciting Mantras, moving their beads, moving their lips, looking at me, smiling, nodding encouragement. This vision gave me the impetus to carry on. I knew then that I had contacted other souls who had gone through the whole thing before me and who said, "Come on, stick it out, carry on, come on, we sit here with you." And I often had the feeling that other help was given to me.

The struggle to know where my first duty was, to the physical work of the Ashram or to my own spiritual practice, is similar to the conflict which may occur within the family setting. This experience was the answer to the intense conflict within myself over this problem.

The Mantra has what I call a self-generating power. If you were to chant quite regularly now, abandon the practice and then perhaps 20 years from now you suddenly found yourself in some crisis, the Mantra might come automatically to your lips and you would continue to repeat it as if you had never ceased.

Q. Supposing I had never heard of the practice of chanting or repeating Mantras, but instinctively, or perhaps after reading something about Coue, I might begin to repeat to myself some phrase like, "I am growing into greater spiritual awareness," or I might take a phrase from the Bible such as, "The Lord is my Shepherd" or "My soul doth magnify the Lord," and constantly repeat this phrase. Would it have the same effect?

A. If you were persistent, yes, it would. Because you would first of all develop single-pointedness of the mind, and then the constant repetition of these phrases would fill your being with very positive thoughts. These would help you to erase all the negative garbage that you had allowed to accumulate over the years. You might not receive any outside help in the same way that you would if you were to chant "Hari Om." But I cannot really say even that, because if your devotion is sincere and you continue your practice, God is sure to hear you.

Q. What about the Lord's Prayer? Would it be possible to recite it as a Mantra?

A. No, it is too long and there are too many different ideas within it, so you could not achieve single-pointedness.

Q. Would there still be anything to be gained by repeating the Lord's Prayer many times, aloud or silently?

A. Oh, yes. The Lord's Prayer is very much like a hymn. It has many aspects. First there is the statement, "Our Father, who art in heaven." Then there is a request, "Give us this day our daily bread." Although these induce a variety of thoughts, feelings and emotions, leading us away from true single-pointedness, the repetition of the prayer will bring your mind into some concentration if it is done with sincerity and meaning.

I have done this and have gained many insights. I have realized, for example, that "Give us this day our daily bread" does not refer just to the bread we eat or even to spiritual bread. "Bread" can refer to anything that may happen to you, both positive and negative. You can absorb only so much as you now are, unless you make a very special effort to extend the perception of your senses. You might have an overpowering experience of the Christ Consciousness and this could be a terrifying experience if you did not know what it was. So when you ask that you may receive your daily bread, ask also that you be not given more than you can handle, or be given additional strength, additional perception to meet whatever comes your way. Thus, each phrase of the Lord's Prayer could be considered as a Mantra.

Now if you take the name of Jesus and focus on that, through repetition you can achieve single-pointedness. It is like focusing all the rays of light through a magnifying glass, so that you can achieve one very

bright, very powerful point of light. Jesus has said, "I am the Light." So, the name of Jesus can be called a Mantra because it is a symbol of power and energy. I think there are perhaps 500 million Christians alive today in the world, and there have been many more who have walked the earth since the time of Christ. Their belief in Him, the belief in His name, gives that name tremendous power, tremendous energy.

Another way to look at it is to think of one drop of water which will accomplish very little, but 500 million drops can cut through rock or, indeed, change the face of the earth. Think again of all the people who have achieved God-consciousness through the chanting of the name of Krishna, Siva, or Jesus, and think of the power of their achievement being present in the combined energy of the Mantra, and you will have some idea of the force that is there.

Q. You stress the power that comes through the repetition of the Name. It seems to me that there would be a danger that I might mispronounce the name of the particular Deity whose Mantra I had chosen to chant. The English version of many Biblical names is different than the Hebrew, and the same must apply to other Eastern names. What influence would this have?

A. It is true that in India many people are concerned with this and when I was there, comments were made that as a Westerner I could not possibly know how to pronounce the names of God correctly. But I did not allow myself to become emotionally involved with this problem. I learned much just by sitting back and watching the people who came to see Sivananda. They came to him from all over India, from different states, speaking different languages and dialects. Some would call him "Shevananda," some would call him "Shivananda" with the accent on the third syllable.

One day I went and asked Gurudev how his name was correctly pronounced. The question startled him and I continued, "Well, if your name is pronounced in so many different ways and the first part of your name, Siva, comes from Lord Siva, and I am repeating the Siva Mantra, is it possible that if I do not pronounce Siva correctly I will have no result? And yet," I continued, "I notice that you listen to me whether I address you as Gurudev, or Sivanandaji; you answer my questions, and so perhaps God does the same."

Swami Sivananda replied, "Yes, your sincerity and what is in

your heart and mind are more important. There are thousands of people who pronounce words correctly, but they have not yet become saints. In the same way, the interpretation of the law can become a preoccupation and we can miss what the law is all about."

So I tell other Westerners who wish to practice Mantras not to worry if they do not know exactly how certain names are to be pronounced. Even in the West, English, French, German, Italian, all come from Latin, and yet today nobody knows if "Cicero" is pronounced with a soft "c" or with a hard "c." I feel that if the power of the Mantra depends only on correct pronunciation then that power cannot be very great. Rather it is your love of God, your persistence and devotion, and your intentions that will bring results.

Q. Well, then if the correct pronunciation is not so important, how important is it to use the correct melody? I find some of the higher notes difficult after awhile, could I not sing them an octave lower?

A. No, no. The Raga* is extremely important and must not be altered. The singing voice can be changed, whereas it may not always be possible to form the sounds for correct pronunciation, but we must make some effort. My own music Guru at the Ashram in Rishikesh, Swami Nada Brahmananda, went to great trouble to help me to increase the range of my voice. I am sure that if it were not so important to sing the correct note at the correct pitch he would not have taken so much time and trouble. He was always happy to be able to report to Gurudev that I was able to sing another tone or two higher. When I could chant the Krishna Invocation, he was overjoyed.

You see, sound is vibration. Sounds and images have a very close relationship. In his book *Japa Yoga* Swami Sivananda gives several examples of singers who could produce images simply by singing a certain note or combination of notes. By creating a particular sound, some material on that same rate of vibration may either come together again or, if the rate of vibration is stronger and higher than that of an object, the object breaks. In high school we made experiments with sound breaking glass. In the Old Testament there is the story of the sound of the trumpets bringing down the walls of Jericho. Today everyone has heard unhappy stories of youngsters who suffer a loss of hearing because they listen to rock music that is played far too loudly.

**Raga* or *Ragini*: the correct Indian term for melody or key, but includes much more than our idea of tune. Literally *raga* means love or passion. In Indian music it is that kind of sound composition which consists of the melodic movements that colour one's heart.

The Raga of a Mantra is primarily a monophonic one, a sequence of single sounds without harmony. In the teachings of Pythagorus it is pointed out that Music, as it was then understood, is linked to arithmetic. This view has been expressed in more recent times in the writing of the late P. D. Ouspensky. The term "Music of the Spheres" belongs to the Greeks as well as to the Orient. The Greeks linked sound and music with astronomy. Aristotle in his *Poetica* states that language, rhythm and sound together make up poetry. However, he points also to another element which has neither name nor form; he gives great emphasis to the power of the word and the power of sound both influencing human thought. The yogic teacher goes on to say that this influence is more far-reaching than it is generally believed to be. Music is not only an orderly system or arrangement of sounds, but power that can and does have an effect on the hearer. Confucius, like Aristotle, claimed that music will influence people and lead them to either right or wrong action.

It is interesting to discover that the Greeks also made a point that the established melody must not be changed because such "lawlessness" leads to destruction.

There is another aspect of the Raga that is very important and to understand this we must consider the two Sanskrit words, "Shabda" and "Bija". Shabda is the name given to the primal sound, the nuclear sound, or OM, from which all things are created. Bija means seed and it is the self-generating power of the Mantra. If you think about the meaning of these two words, you will see that through constant and correct chanting of a Mantra, you will be helped to release greater energy within your physical, mental, emotional and spiritual bodies. With this increase of energy you will also be helped to get in touch with the Divine within you, your true Self, your Higher Self.

Q. Is there a special Mantra for me? How would I go about choosing a Mantra?

A. Yes, there is a special Mantra for you, but this does not mean that no two people will have the same Mantra. There is a particular sound or vibration to which your spiritual body will best respond. In the beginning, many people feel they need protection and the Siva Mantra may be the answer to that first impulse. To worship Lord Siva it is sufficient to utter his name while dropping clear water over a Siva stone. The early Rishis perceived the various aspects of the Divine and Siva was recognized as the originator, the Sakta, the Lord of Kundalini and

Hatha Yoga, which are very active practices demanding discipline. But for those who do not have that ability, calling on Siva's name while pouring a little water over a stone representing Him is adequate.

Worship of other aspects of the Divine may be more elaborate, burdening the worshipper with details to the exclusion of the finer feelings of gratitude for knowledge of what this personalized aspect of the impersonal power truly represents.

The subtlety of the psychology of these procedures, concepts and attitudes may be more easily understood if we remember that at the time of the development of such systems, mechanical clocks did not exist, so the inner clock in human beings had to be developed. That practice alone, when done with precision, could lead the devotee to remarkable understanding. The early yogis then realized that this was not the only way in which the mind could be trained, in fact its powers could be vastly extended. The desire to make oneself accessible to those powers, using the methods developed, can bring about an experience of greater Reality.

Hari Om, a Mantra to invoke Lord Krishna, is not as different from Om Namah Sivaya as it appears to the beginner. It leads to an understanding of the greater Oneness by a different approach. Krishna is like a lover luring the devotee into a personal relationship with the Divine by the haunting sound of His flute. Here the devotee is led by an inclination to romance into a partnership with Krishna, thereby easing feelings of loneliness.

In each situation the natural inclinations and temperament of the devotee are met. Is that not what we see everywhere in life? Each person is drawn to that which is most attractive, desirable and satisfying. The division between the power and meaning of Mantras will disappear as the spiritual aspirant matures. Understanding of Eastern psychology takes on greater and greater subtlety until the aspirant is finally no longer dependent on the personal aspect of that awesome Power called by these various names.

Each Mantra will lead to God-realization, to the top of the spiritual mountain, but each one will take a slightly different path.

There are many ways in which a Mantra may be chosen. You may be fortunate enough to find your Guru who will choose a Mantra most suitable for you; you may give the message to your Guru, or it may be given by the Guru in a moment of inspiration.

Q. Does it ever happen that someone will write to you, perhaps someone you have never met, telling you that they wish to follow the spiritual life more fully and would like to begin the practice of chanting a Mantra? If they wish to choose a Mantra, what advice would you give them?

A. In such a case I make them aware of the existing record or tape that I have made giving samples of three or four Mantras. One way to make a choice is to stretch out in a comfortable position with closed eyes, listen and see if there is any response, any intuitive indication. It might, for example, be "Most Beautiful Mother" or the name of Jesus Christ chanted to "Hari Om." This then would be the Mantra.

There is always the possibility that in the course of time another Mantra will come to the surface quite naturally. The melody may just come up by itself. But I would make detailed inquiries into this, to ascertain that the new Mantra was not just due to the restlessness of the mind. I would not want anyone to change a Mantra until they had some experience of the power of the first one. It is not until a later stage of development that several Mantras can be used simultaneously, because all of them are active within you. You must start with one Mantra and lay a good foundation. Then, when your comprehension has grown and you understand that all power is indeed one, there is no confusion. You can take another Mantra and recite it to know the difference in experience. You will want to help others, and be able to help them from many angles.

Q. So then, if a housewife were to write to you requesting help in chanting Mantras, would you suggest that she choose one of the Mantras on the tape and then repeat this when she is doing her housework, washing dishes and so on?

A. Yes. Washing dishes and scrubbing floors are good tasks to be doing while reciting a Mantra. They are also good for self-purification. I would also suggest that a new student keep a daily diary, record experiences and obstacles encountered and write to the Ashram for advice. I would also suggest chanting or reciting the Mantra in some quiet place at a regular time each day, as this is very important.

Q. Where should I keep my concentration while I am chanting? On the third eye?

A. No, not necessarily. If you are washing dishes you cannot keep your concentration on the third eye, but you can hold the mental image of the power of the Mantra personified in a deity, and so spiritualize your housework. You can also listen to the sound of your voice, watch your breath, and you can create a desire and a liking for the Mantra. Do this by thinking of what a Mantra is, what the mystery and power of a Mantra are, how you create sounds, what happens to them, and whether the energy of the sound you produce disappears when it can no longer be heard. Jesus has said that we are responsible for every word that we say, so we must think about that. We may then become aware that much of the sound that has come from our lips has not been the best. We will learn this through chanting, and by using the power of the Mantra we can undo any wrong we may have caused.

Q. I do not quite understand you.

A. Very well. Let us take an example on a personal level. Let us say you have been doing some negative talking about someone and suddenly you catch yourself. How can you undo it? It is done, you have said it. You can do two things. First, on becoming aware of your mistake, quickly chant a Mantra and surround the person with Light and with the power of the Mantra. Use the Divine Light Invocation† and put the person you spoke negatively about into the Light. As you become more aware you may say, "Oh, I don't want you to think this is all there is to him; there is also another side to his personality. I do not want you to have a one-sided picture that is all negative; in fact, I would prefer that you forget what I said." In this way you can try to undo what happened in a moment of carelessness.

Now, if you think that there have been more moments of carelessness than you are aware of, it is a good idea to do the same thing for others you know; put them in the Light, chant a Mantra and ask that your weakness will not affect them and that you will be forgiven. The great Aurobindo has said that even the most advanced yogi may make a mistake in a moment of forgetfulness or unawareness. It is difficult to be on guard 24 hours a day. To protect yourself while sleeping, fill your mind with the Mantra before falling asleep. If you wake with the Mantra, it is likely that you have been with it throughout the night.

Q. You have mentioned that we might chant while doing some household tasks, but I think you have also recommended chanting or repeating the Mantra while engaged in Hatha Yoga. Could you comment on this?

A. Yes, this is a very good idea. Of course, I learned this approach from Swami Sivananda. He would make me sit in an asana and chant Mantras, and I would certainly advise you to begin this practice. I would suggest that you start with some asana that you are fairly comfortable in. You might sit in the Spinal Twist, for example, and repeat "Om Namah Sivaya" ten times, first on one side and then on the other. Then you can go through your body and think, "How many bends are there in my body, what else is my body doing at this time besides just bending?" From there you can investigate thoroughly, trying to understand the psychological and symbolic or spiritual meaning of each asana.

Let us take the Peacock Posture (Mayurasana), as another example. There are certain things you know already about the peacock; it is associated with vanity. There is the famous painting of Narcissus, a young boy stading naked in front of a mirror, holding peacock feathers behind him. And so the colours, the feathers, make it clear that he is admiring himself and showing off. But that is quite an obvious message. You will also read in Iyengar's book, *Light on Yoga*, that this particular asana is beneficial for removing toxins from the body. Iyengar tells us that just as the peacock kills snakes, so does this asana "kill" toxins. But there is also the peacock that is the vehicle for Lord Subramanya, and the peacock that is used in Christian iconography to represent the glory of heaven. And you may think, perhaps, of the position of the asana, how you are balanced with the elbows pressed against the abdomen in the region of the navel. You meditate on all the meanings of these suggestions.

Q. To return to the housewife for a minute. I can imagine that if she were very enthusiastic, or perhaps felt a little uncomfortable about chanting by herself, she might just put on a tape of you singing the Mantra over and over — "Hari Om," for instance, or "Om Namah Sivaya" — is this a legitimate practice?

A. Yes, it is. It is always beneficial to have the Mantra tape playing in the background, preferably the same Mantra. If you are doing something else, or if you are very tired and you do not feel that you have the will power to sit down and chant yourself, it will always help to listen to the Mantra.

Let us look at it another way. Suppose that before you go to sleep you watch the late news on television. Then everything that you see or hear would be taken into your sleep and you might have nightmares.

Or if you have an argument with someone before you go to bed, you will take the anger to bed with you and it will manifest in your sleep. The unconscious will try to free itself from the feeling and will work it out in a dream.

But if you play a Mantra tape, you are doing several things; you are displaying a certain weakness and a certain power. The weakness to be overcome is the ego and the inborn laziness that says, "Why should I do this?" But, by even switching on the tape you are giving in to the higher desire, "Really, I must do something!" So you read the newspaper to satisfy the carnal mind, but you exercise a control or mastery over it by listening to the Mantra. If there are negative things in your reading, the Mantra will help to counteract them and, by continually playing the tape, and chanting whenever you have a few moments to yourself, the habit will gradually become stronger and stronger in the day-to-day events of your life.

The habit of keeping the Mantra close to the surface will become stronger with practice. When I hear a fire siren or an ambulance I immediately say, "Om Namah Sivaya — somebody is in need, let there be help." If you see a picture of people killed in a battle in the Middle East, or anywhere in the world, and you become aware of how much suffering there is, do the Divine Light Invocation. Think of the lonely people dying in hospitals. If you wonder what you can do about such things, before going to sleep, spin a cocoon of Light around yourself and say, "Let the soul go out, the body is at rest, the house is taken care of, let the Higher Self do what needs to be done, many things that I cannot do, even if I want to, sitting here by day."

Q. This will be very inspiring for the individual in the city who aspires to the spiritual life and undertakes to chant the Mantra, repeat the name of God, and so on. Are there any other aspects of this practice that they should know about? For example, at Satsang at the Ashram I have sometimes seen people break down and weep for no apparent reason and I feel that this might also happen to someone in the city. Can you comment on this please?

A. Tears are not easy to accept. We have been brought up in the West to believe that tears are just an emotional outlet and perhaps something to be ashamed of, but this is not really the case. When chanting we often get in touch with emotions we did not know were there, tears held back from childhood. There can be tears of self-pity, or tears of

regret at having wasted so many years, maybe even lifetimes, in pursuits that did no more than feed the ego.

Sometimes these tears can be a spiritual bath, a rejuvenating force that can refresh by washing away an accumulation of sadness. Life can then take on, little by little, a different meaning. Swami Sivananda had suggested that at such times I say, "All right, here are my tears. I have symbolically collected them. My tears are very precious to me and I don't want to cry them senselessly. With them I wash the feet of Divine Mother." But do not indulge yourself. Do not let yourself think that you are making great progress because you shed tears. Only a little progress!

Q. I have also seen people quite literally pass out while chanting. Is this a usual phenomenon?

A. Yes. There are several reasons. You can become unconscious if you have poor blood circulation and you chant by yourself over a long period of time; then you just faint, and this has no particular after-effect on you. However, it is also possible, particularly in group chanting, that someone will collapse, but this is because the atomic structure of the brain has to be changed to adjust to the new vibration to which it is being exposed. The same experience of a sudden loss of consciousness can be caused by the Divine Light Invocation, or any similar spiritual practice.

Now, if it is a genuine response to the power of the Mantra, and not just due to poor circulation, there will be a noticeable change in the personality of the individual; there will be a tendency to rethink many concepts, new ideals will be established. There will be a growing desire to break free from limitations. There will be a conscious striving to be on the Spiritual Path. However, the student must be taught how to control this power that has so suddenly manifested.

Q. How can this be done?

A. There is a very simple method. It is necessary only to feel the feet placed firmly on the floor and to remind oneself that one is here, now. Because, you see, we have to be here. Man is the bridge between two worlds, the world of the physical, material body, and the unseen world created by the mind, which also manifests something of that which is created through our belief in it.

There is also another technique to help control the sudden rush of this new energy, or energy newly experienced: it is explained more fully in my record on *Guided Meditation on the Light*, but briefly it consists of seeing a beautiful golden Lotus at the base of the spine and then gently but firmly placing the Light within the spine back in that Lotus where it belongs, and closing the petals securely around the Light. Again, remind yourself by an act of will to be here, now. The control of will is a very fine decision; when to surrender and when to exercise will is one of the secrets of being succesful in yoga.

It is very important not to indulge emotions, not to seek experience, not to try to bring on a similar experience by chanting very quickly or trying out some fancy breathing technique. Two things will happen if you give in to this temptation. First of all, you will soon doubt if any experience is really a manifestation of the Divine and not just an artificial production of your own imagination. Secondly, you will be caught up in the desire for experience, for sensation, and not look beyond to see the true Light.

As a small child is given little rewards each time it makes greater effort to walk or master some other skill, so the Divine will give us some reward, some beautiful experience, as we endeavour to make our first, faltering steps on the Royal Highway that leads us back to our true Home. At a later date in our spiritual practice we will be faced with another temptation, the lure of "siddhis", the powers that will develop within ourselves, powers of extrasensory perception, powers of foretelling the future. At times, of course, we can use these powers for good, but too often they are only a temptation to the ego, giving it an excuse to exercise itself after we have kept it under control for so long. If we give in to this temptation we may fall back even further from our spiritual goal than we were before we started the practice of chanting Mantras!

Q. I think I understand you correctly that I should not use any energy that I may manifest through chanting a Mantra for the gratification of my own ego, and that certainly makes sense. But how can I safely use this energy to help others?

A. You can chant for others when you are prompted by your own intuition, the Guru within. You must be sure that you are acting out of compassion and not just sympathy, in which you identify with the problem of the person you want to help. Be aware of any desire to influence events or of any strong emotional response. In chanting for others

we must keep our own will out of the way, surrendering to the power of the Mantra, to the Most High.

Q. If I were chanting and my mind began to wander, would it be alright to chant each Mantra for a different friend or relative, as well as people I might remember having met on the street or in a shop, or seen in a restaurant?

A. Yes, but you should not keep your mind on the person. It is like writing a letter, except that you write only the address. You may address many different envelopes, but you send each person the same message. At the beginning of each Mantra you may mention the name of the person for whom you chant, but you try to concentrate on the Mantra itself, the different tones, or the image of the deity connected with it. Do not think of the image of the person you are chanting for, because by doing that you may interfere with that person and this we must not do.

Q. At different times we have talked about Hatha Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, as well as Mantra Yoga. Where does Mantra Yoga fit into the overall picture? Is Mantra Yoga as important as the others? I suspect from what you say that it is one of the most important yogas.

A. Yes. It is like this. Think of a rose and then take the rose apart. Are the outer petals important, or the inner petals, is the very centre important, or is the stem? The whole thing together is important. Each part is important and the rose becomes imperfect without some of the petals, for example, or without the stem.

It is the same thing with yoga. It is very difficult for us in the West to really understand any of the yogas. When you do Hatha Yoga, for example, what we call Hatha Yoga is nothing more than a few asanas ripped out of a very complex system. When you do the various asanas you are also meant to stimulate the inner glandular system for the posture to be really effective. And as I have already said, you should then, at that time, recite your own Mantra, the one you have chosen or that has been given to you, the one you feel comfortable with.

Q. I have heard reference made to Nada Yoga and the Science of Thaana. Could you explain the connection with Mantra?

A. Nada Yoga is the Yoga of Sound and you can say that Mantra

Yoga and the Science of Thaan are both systems with Nada Yoga. The Indians have for centuries made a very detailed study of the effects of sound or, more correctly, of vibration. They are well aware of the power of sound in healing and in awakening the Cakras (the centres of consciousness) in the Kundalini system.

Q. I have heard it said that Mantra has an effect on the subconscious and I would think that one of the most common criticisms of Mantra or Japa is that it is a form of hypnotism. What would be your answer to that?

A. I can understand how people would think that. It is a natural reaction. However, I do not think it is possible for anyone to hypnotize themselves into becoming holy. There would be a deep conflict and either the mind would one day become deranged or the individual would go back to the old way of living.

We should also consider that for a long time we have indeed hypnotized ourselves and thereby set up limitations which prevent us from seeing and making use of our full potential. Television is only one of the most obvious forms of hypnotism. We are constantly bombarded with the idea that we must have a new car or that our bodies have an odour which must be concealed. In more subtle ways we are told throughout our life that we must have a good job, make money and that we must be married. All this is hypnotism. I would rather consider the chanting of Mantra as a process of dehypnotism because greater awareness and understanding are achieved, however slow the process may be.

If we think, too, of the aspect of reincarnation, then we have to consider that for many lifetimes we have hypnotized ourselves into what we are today, into the strong beliefs that have become prejudices. These prevent us from seeing the beauty and the truth of the Divine, not only in others, but in ourselves. And so, even if the chanting of a Mantra were a form of hypnotism, by focusing on the name of God and the power of God within our being, the practice works to counteract these preconceptions.

I once met a young man who wanted to become the youngest millionaire. He achieved that. That was his goal and he put all his efforts into that. The result is that he had totally neglected the higher aspects of consciousness; he does not realize that man is the bridge between this world and a very different one that cannot be bought with any amount of money; where money, in fact, has no meaning whatsoever.

Now this young man can serve as an example. We can become what we put into our mind, and therefore if the intense effort, the drive and the power of the emotions are put into becoming the youngest millionaire then that can likely be achieved. If the same amount of energy is put into becoming Self-realized, that is worth the effort. After Realization there is probably very little left to wish for, but after one has become a millionaire there is a whole new set of problems and desires: how do I keep the money, how can I make more money, how will I find friends who love me for what I am and not for my money. But if one becomes Self-realized then all are friends, because one can see the Divine in everyone.

Q. I suppose the young man who wanted to be a millionaire would have been better off if he had chanted to Lakshmi! This brings me to another point that we really have not touched on. You have said that there are Mantras for Siva and Mantras for Krishna and Mantras for Lakshmi, and these all have separate ragas and achieve slightly different results. But are there other forms of Mantra? Some seem to me to be much longer than "Hari Om" or "Om Namah Sivaya."

A. There are, first of all, the Mantras dealing with Light, purity, reality. This is the highest form of Mantra leading to purification and Realization. These Mantras are given by the Guru to the initiate, and you will find very little written about them.

Then there are Mantras dealing with the changing quality of nature, filled with restlessness, and those who wished to satisfy more worldly desires, having lots of money, giving birth to a son, and so on, would resort to these.

Lastly, there are Mantras reflecting ignorance, inertia, darkness, all that perishes and these would be used for selfish purposes, such as revenge. The Mantras which lead to Self-realization will obviously take the longest time to come to fruition.

The four-line Mantra, however, promises the attainment of a particular specified power. Shankaracharya has written in the 11th century a treatise called "The

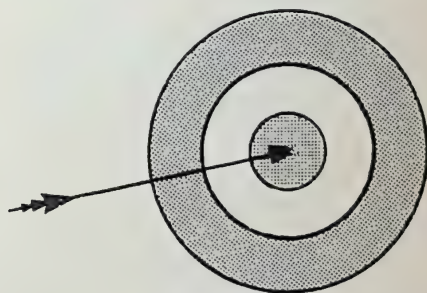


Mantras of Ananda Lahari," which means "waves of bliss." It can be consulted for more information about those which are used for different purposes. He has discussed some 140 Mantras and dismissed many others as insignificant or quite useless. With the four-line Mantras, of course, there are also different forms of worship and different forms of "Yantras," the allegoric designs associated with a Mantra.

There is one four-line Mantra that we recite at the Ashram. It begins, "O Divine Mother, may all our speech and idle talk be Mantra." Now, if you recite this Mantra a thousand times a day for 45 days you will attain the power that is in the Mantra, in this case the knowledge of all scriptures.*

There have been many books written about four-line Mantras, and if you were to read them all you would learn a great deal. But what you learn would be as nothing in comparison to the experience you would have by reading nothing and instead just chanting Mantras.

*Salutations And Gratitude To All The Gurus
Who Have Prepared The Way.*



*See following page.

O Divine Mother!

May all my speech and idle talk be Mantra,

All actions of my hands be Mudra,

*All eating and drinking be the offering of oblations
unto Thee,*

All lying down prostrations before Thee;

May all pleasures be as dedicating my entire self unto Thee,

May everything I do be taken as Thy worship.

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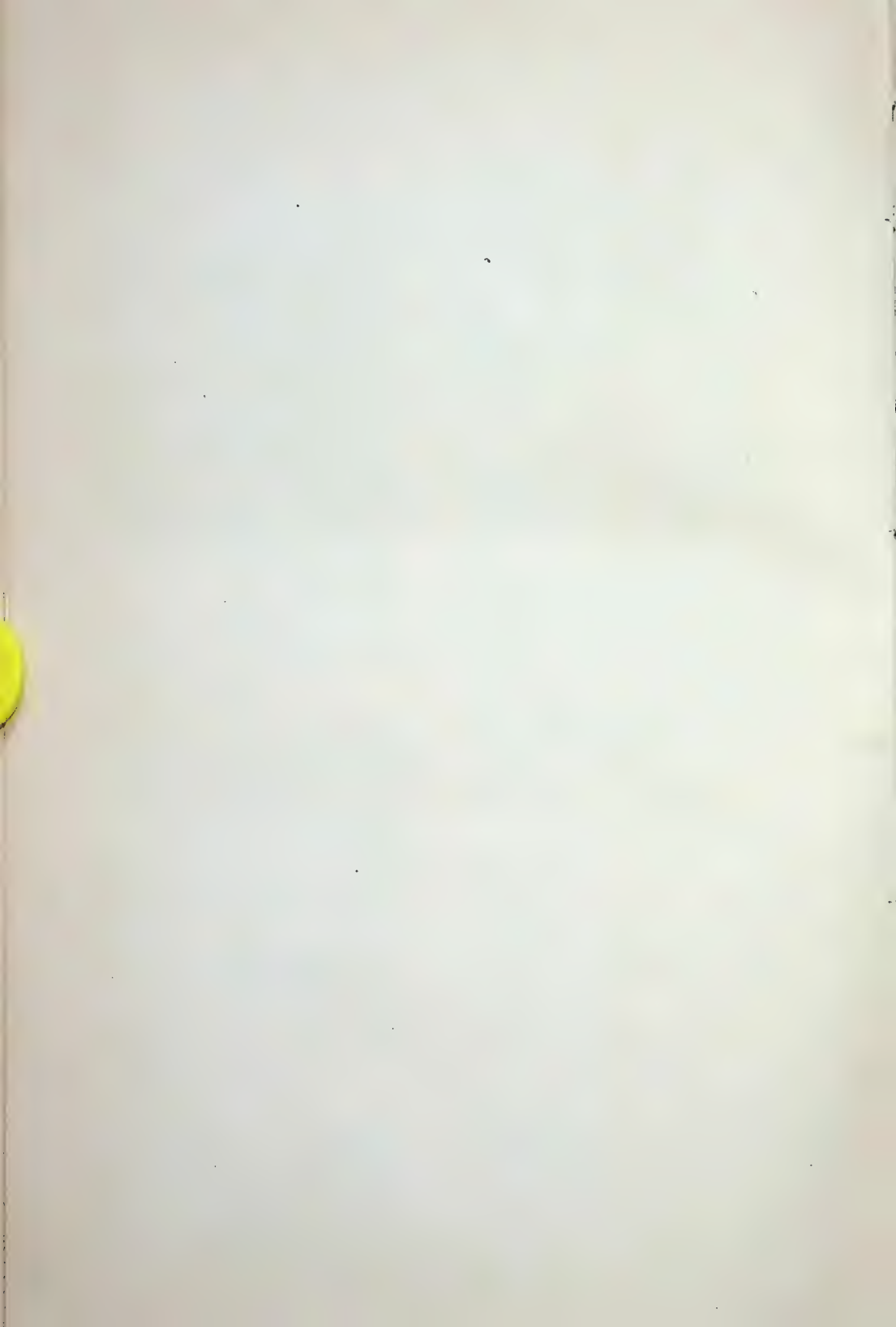
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